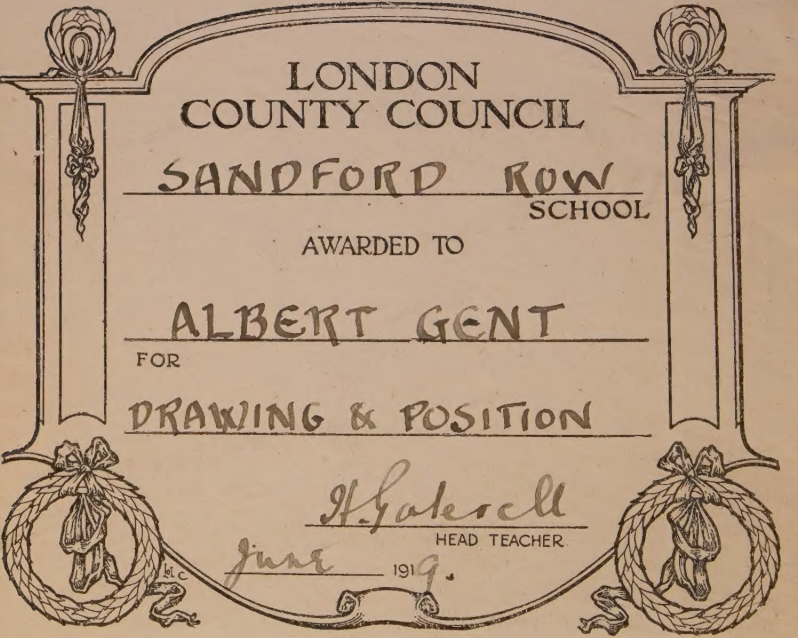


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"THEY WERE COMING ON LIKE A WHIRLWIND"

IN THE GREAT WHITE LAND

A TALE OF THE ANTARCTIC OCEAN

BY

DR. GORDON STABLES, R.N.

Author of "The Naval Cadet" "In Far Bolivia"

"To Greenland and the Pole" etc.

*WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY AMBROSE DE WALTON
AND A MAP*

BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED

LONDON GLASGOW AND BOMBAY

“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around ;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled
Like noises in a swound !”

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BOOK I

FAR AWAY IN THE FROZEN NORTH

IN THE GREAT WHITE LAND

CHAPTER I

DAYDAWN IN THE ARCTIC REGIONS—WERE THEY
SAVAGES ?

“Is it a man, or is it a young Polar bear standing on end ?”

Had any one seen that strange figure, shuffling slowly to and fro on the snow-clad Polar ice on this bitterly cold morning late in winter, he might have been excused for asking himself that question.

All around was a scene of desolation such as can only be witnessed in Arctic seas at this season of the year.

Desolation ? Yes ; but beautiful desolation—a desolation that held one spellbound in silent, solemn admiration.

It had been a long, long night of just three months or nearly, and yesterday the sun—glad herald of the opening season —had glinted over the southern

horizon for one brief spell, then sunk again in golden glory.

Yesterday all hands had crowded the deck, the frozen rigging, and the tops themselves of the good barque *Walrus*, to welcome with cheers and song the first appearance of the god of day. And from many a hole in igloo side, in the village that clustered half hidden beneath those pearly hills, natives had crawled out, as crawleth rat from its burrow, to throw themselves on their faces, to moan, to worship, and to pray.

To-day the romance has worn off a little, and the crew of the *Walrus* (which a peep round the side of the one solitary iceberg that rises in the midst of this frozen bay reveals) will raise nor song nor cheer.

But the white light broadens in the southern sky, the beams of the aurora, that a little while before were flickering and dancing pink and white in the north, fade, the bright stars wax faint and beautiful, then die. A broad band of orange light low down on the horizon, with far above one crimson feather cloud—then the sun's appearance.

Ah! We can see now that the figure is no bear, but a man, though covered with hoar frost—his skin boots, skin cap, skin coat and all, and his beard and moustache are white and hung with icicles, which tinkle as he climbs the iceberg, lifts the old quadrant, and takes his sight.

While he does so he touches a button, on a little

box hung to his short belt, which sets up communication with an instrument and chronometer on the ship.

The man with the beard of tinkling icicles is Captain Mayne Brace himself. Laughing with almost boyish glee as he slings his quadrant and beats his mittened, paw-like hands to woo back their circulation, he quickly descends, and begins to round in the slack of the field telegraph.

Two huge black Newfoundlands, Nora and Nick, have found their way down off the ship, and now come rushing to meet him, making the icy rocks and hills around the bay ring back their joyous barking.

There is, I believe, no light in all the wide world half so bright and dazzling as that of the first brief day of an Arctic spring. Scarce can the human eye, so long accustomed to the soft, tender star-rays, the flickering, coloured aurora, or magic moon-beams, bear to look on the white wastes all around, which seem to have been sown with billions and trillions of tiny diamonds, the God-made prisms and crystals of the virgin snow, pure and white as brow of angel.

The ship towards which Captain Mayne Brace is slowly advancing looks, but for her masts and rigging, like a white marquee, for from stem to stern she had been roofed over, many, many moons ago,

when first anchored here in the Gulf of Incognita high to the North, and west of Baffin's Bay.

Snow-steps lead him aboard, and the surgeon himself meets him at the frozen gangway.

"Sick all doing well, sir," says the doctor. "Every one been out to-day to peep at the sun, and the sight has done them all good, though it has made some of them long for the green glades and rolling woods of dear old England. But come below, captain, and thaw your beard. Dinner ready to dish up. Let me lead you. Mind that rope. Step high, and you'll manage. There, now, catch hold of the rail, and I'll go down the companion in front. Just fourteen steps. Make your feet your friends, and count."

For Captain Mayne Brace was for the time being snow-blind.

At the foot of the ladder the steward helped him to get out of his ice-rig, and to thaw his beard and eyebrows, then led him in.

He looked old no longer, but brown-bearded, rosy, rubicund, and jolly—just as a sailor should be.

It was not, however, until the soup was finished—real pea-soup with some strength and body in it—that he once more regained his sight. He had shut his eyes and leaned back in his easy-chair while the steward was changing the plates, and when he looked again, he beheld the saloon table encircled with bright, youthful, and happy faces.

Faces with hope in them, eyes that danced with new-born joy ; for after all these months of dreary darkness, of shrieking storms and blinding blizzards, had they not seen the sun at last ? Yes, and the days would lengthen and lengthen till it would be all one long, bright Arctic day. The snows would melt in the glens yonder, avalanches would fall thundering into the valleys beneath, the tides would break the ice around ; yonder mountain berg, which had loomed ghost-like all through the everlasting night of winter, would move seawards and away ; then a week of mist, which would lift at length, and reveal hills already patched with the yellow and red of lichens and the green of mosses, soft and tender. For summer comes quickly in the Arctic.

And what then ? Why, the birds would return in their tens of thousands, the gulls and gullimots, the malleys, the pilots, the beautiful angel-snowbird, and the wee snow-bunting itself. Then it would be summer, you see. Bears themselves, that slept in frozen pits or caves for months and months, would be on the prowl once more, and eke the Arctic foxes ; the sea would be alive and teeming with fish, from great sharks down to the sportive and gay little ghahkas. Whales—the gigantic “*right* whales”—would dash into the bay, unicorns would be seen, great seals and walruses would scramble on to patches of ice to bask in the sunshine ; and, spreading white sails now

to woo the breeze, the *Walrus* barque would steam slowly away through the opening ice, all hands intent on making their fortunes, that in a "bumper ship" they might sail southwards long before the autumn winds began to blow.

Hadn't Captain Mayne Brace told those two happy, hungry boys yonder all that would happen? And was the captain ever wrong? Not he.

"Yes, mate, I will have another slice of that brown beef," said Charlie.

"Thank you, mate," said Walt; "and why shouldn't I?"

Both boys were about the same age—glorious and independent sixteen—both called the captain uncle, yet the boys were only cousins.

They loved, respected, nay, even revered, that brown-bearded skipper, as only boys that have an "uncle" who has been twenty long years on the stormy ocean can, and do.

This had been the lads' first cruise. They were orphans, and though well educated, had been left almost penniless, and were going to adopt the sea as a profession. Their uncle had apprenticed them to the barque, and just because he liked them, they lived here in the saloon, and had a cabin all to themselves, instead of roughing it on the half-deck, sleeping in wooden bunks, and "chumming" it with the spectioneer, the carpenter, and bo's'n.

He liked the lads, I say, and no man who is over forty, and has still a soul left in him, can help liking an innocent boy of this age, ere yet the bloom has left his healthy cheeks, or the days have come when he scores twenty and fancies himself a real live man.

Walt and Charlie to-day, being so happy at heart from having seen the sun again, were raking the skipper fore and aft with concentrated broadsides of questions.

It was "Oh, I say, uncle," this and "I say, uncle," this, that, and t'other all the time, until the great plum-pudding was borne in, and then they stopped their chatter for a minute at least, to wonder and admire.

No ordinary "plum-duff" this. It was large, and round, and brown, and jolly, half inclined to burst its sides with merriment, as the mate lovingly poured the rich gravy over it. Inside it was studded with real raisins, like the stars of an Arctic night in number. Those raisins were well within hail of each other, and not simply dotted and dibbled in here and there as with the point of a marling-spike.

For Captain Mayne Brace knew how a boy or man should live, to buck himself up to face the rigours of an Arctic winter.

While the boys are busy striking their share of that lordly plum-pudding below, let me say just one brief word or two about the *Walrus* herself.

She was almost a new barque then, and good enough to go anywhere and do anything, and belonged to three speculative merchants at Hull. These owners thought they knew quite a deal about Greenland East and Greenland West, and because they had never been to Polar seas, imagined that you had only to have a good ship and a crack crew to steam and sail away to the frozen North, pick up a paying cargo of seals or whales—skins and blubber—and sail back again, giving to the spirited owners a modest 200 per cent. on the capital.

The *Walrus* had been capitally found, her engines were the best, she was built of teak and braced with oak, fortified forward and all along the water-line, and carried every modern appliance that a barque could bear, with electric light, and—well, and what not?

Then Brace himself had been in the “country,” as the sea of ice is called, all his life, so had Milton the mate—both Dundee men—and the crew of Hull men, Scots, and Shetlanders could hardly have been better chosen.

“I’m going to do my level best,” Captain Mayne Brace had said to his owners, as they all sat together in the cosy saloon, while, hardly a year ago, the *Walrus*, with steam up, was just about to bear up and away. “I’ll do my best, gentlemen, to bring the *Walrus* home a bumper ship. I’ll try the sealing

first. If they have been scared away by the impulsive Danes, I'll bear up for the Bay of Baffin and do what I can with the whales, even if I have to winter there and wait for the spring fishing."

"Bravo, Brace!" said one of the owners. "It is all a bit of a spec on our part, you know. But we're *well* insured, Brace, and rather than come home a clean ship, we wouldn't mind if you left her ribs in Baffin's Bay."

Brace smiled. He knew what they meant. He had heard such hints before. But these greedy owners had made just one mistake. They had chosen as skipper an honest man—the noblest work of God.

"I'm going to do the best for us all," he repeated quietly.

Then good-byes were said, and the ship had sailed.

Nor'wards, ever nor'wards, the *Walrus* had gone cracking on, under steam or under sail, leaving the green British shores on which spring was already spreading bourgeon, wild flower, and leaf. Nor'wards, and past the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the Faroes; nor'wards, into wilder, bluer, blacker seas and shorter days, encountering storms such as cannot even be conceived by sailors in other parts of the world, with waves as high as pyramids, foam-crested, and madly, demoniacally breaking around, or against, or over the barque; nor'wards, with ice-bound bows, and snow-storms raging on the deck, and seas that sang in

the frosty air as they went curling past ; nor'wards as defiantly as ever sailed ship from British shore.

Nor'wards, but all in vain. For the Danes, who had ploughed their way in their sturdy high-freeboard ships through the darkness of winter itself, had been there before them.

Long months' fishing and hardly fifty tons of oil. British though they were, the daring Danes had kept ahead of them, leaving naught for them to gaze upon save blood-stained ice and gory krengs, on which gaunt bears were feeding.

Captain Mayne Brace, disgusted, had left the country, and, after a long voyage, had arrived in Baffin's Bay.

A few "right whales" had been seen, but even they were hunted and wild, and so they had fished all the summer and caught nothing.

Well, but Captain Brace only shook his brown beard and laughed. He wasn't the man to let down his heart in a hurry.

He was just the very life and soul of his crew ; he bore all his own hardships with never a murmur, and had taught his men to do the same. All through the darkness he studied to keep them active. They had games on the snow under stars and aurora ; they fished in the ice-holes, tobogganed on the one great ghostly berg that lay not far off ; and, on board, hardly an evening passed but some sort of

amusement had been on the boards—a play, a dance, a sing-song, a yarning-and-story-telling spell, or a concert itself.

They had often gone on shore in sledges, the men drawing each other time about, and Nick and Nora lending a shoulder.

The doctor was a plucky, clever young fellow about twenty years old, who, having to wait for another whole twelve months before he should be old enough—though he had passed—to be gowned and capped, thought he might as well put in that year at sea, and so here he was.

Next to the skipper himself young Dr. Wright was the best-loved man on board. He was really the quintessence of kindness, and you never would have found him in his bunk if one of the men were seriously ill.

To-day he would not wait the conclusion of dinner, but, with his telescope strapped across his shoulder, he had scrambled right up to the crow's-nest itself, to have one look round before the sun went down again.

At sea it is always the strange and the unexpected that is happening.

But when Wright turned his glass towards the great snow-lands of the west, he started back and rubbed his eyes.

Were those eyes deceiving him?

He wiped the glass and looked again.

"Mercy on us!" he muttered. "Who or what are these?"

It was a team of some kind that had just come over the horizon, and was now wending its way adown the league-long slope towards the head of the bay.

And now he can make them out more distinctly. It was some wild and wandering tribe of semi-savages from the interior, with dogs and sledges and men on skis,* or snow-shoes.

He knew that these roving bands were dangerous, and that they came but to rob or even to carry off into exile the more peaceable Yaks who live along the shores.

So he went hurrying down now to make his report, and soon the news spread through the ship, and the excitement was very great indeed.

The warriors—if warriors they were—delayed their coming, however.

The sun set, darkness fell, and it seemed evident that the natives had made a *détour*, or gone away entirely.

But watchful eyes guarded the *Walrus* and the village on shore through all the dreary hours of darkness that followed.

The Yaks ashore yonder had been altogether

* Skis, pronounced *shees*.

friendly to the *Walrus* people, and Captain Mayne Brace determined that he would defend them to the last in case of attack.

But night passed by without a single event happening ; and about half-past ten, just as the dawn began to appear in the east, like the reflection from a great city, Wright went up to the crow's-nest, and once more turned his telescope westwards.

Yes ; yonder they were, sure enough, at the very head of the bay not five miles off. He could see their gesticulations, and watch the men as they went scurrying to and fro seeking for errant dogs to harness to the sledges.

They were coming ! And before day dawned or the sun rose they would be all around the ship.

The best way to secure peace is to be ready for war.

But Captain Mayne Brace was soon prepared to welcome either friend or foe.

Were they savages ?

CHAPTER II

“HEAVE ROUND, SIR,” SAID CAPTAIN MAYNE
BRACE

When the *Walrus*, in the shortening days of autumn, had steamed slowly into Incognita Bay, she had to force her way through the pancake ice with which the whole extent of the water was covered. Flat pieces these are, probably no more than a foot thick, covered of course with several inches of snow, and with an average diameter of, say, eight feet. They are really the *débris* of a baby-floe which the waves, raised by some far-off gale of wind, have broken up. The snow-edge all around them is raised by the constant contact of the pieces of ice with one another, and this gives them a fancied resemblance to gigantic pancakes. Hence their name.

But soon after the *Walrus* had anchored, the sky had cleared, and in the dead, unbroken silence of an early winter, they were frozen together by strong bay-ice. Then snow had fallen and fallen and fallen, with never a breath of wind strong enough to lift one feathery flake, till, on looking out over the bulwarks

one morning after the decks had been cleared, and the sun was shining again, lo! the whole surface of the bay was one unbroken, unwrinkled sheet of dazzling snow.

Had that fall continued it would have buried ship and crew and all.

Then the glass had gone down somewhat, and the snow-field fell and shrank.

Harder frost than ever rendered Nature's winter winding-sheet after this so solid and hard, that a regiment of artillery could have passed over it and left not a trace behind.

When snow had again fallen, it had been accompanied by such high, wild winds, that the flakes were ground into choking ice-dust, and swept clean off the surface of the bay.

The head of this inlet was about five nautical miles from the ship, but as soon as the advancing natives got on to the level snow-bay, with dogs and sledges, they commenced to make short work of this, and their strange, shrill cries, as the dogs were urged madly onwards, could now be distinctly heard by those on board the *Walrus*.

They were coming on like a whirlwind!

Faded the rich orange bar on the southern horizon, and the first rays of the great silver shield of a sun fell athwart the bay.

The advance was stopped in a second's time.

Down dropped men and dogs, the dogs to rest and pant, the natives to pray, their heads turned sunwards.

Two figures in the tallest sledge, who were wrapped in the skins of the big ice-bear, did not descend. Yet even they bent low their heads in reverence.

"We will have no fight," said Captain Mayne Brace. "Men who pray never fight, save in a cause that is just."

"For all that," said "Dr." Wright, "look yonder!"

He was pointing northwards, where the Teelies, as the friendly natives were called, could now be seen rapidly advancing in a compact body, all armed with that terrible battle-axe, the seal-club.

They were evidently bent on intercepting the newcomers. Perhaps they knew, of old, those semi-savages from the far interior.

"Now," said the skipper, "this affair enters on a new phase, and if we cannot intervene as peace-makers, the snow out yonder will soon be brown with blood."

"I have it, sir," cried bold young Wright. "Give me ten men, and I will go and meet the Teelies. I don't want to see bloodshed, captain. I have enough on the sick-list as it is, without the addition of wounded Yaks."

"Take your men, and off you go, Wright," cried Mayne Brace, laughing; "but I believe you are just spoiling for a fight all the same."

Before an Englishman could have said “Auchtermuchty” without choking, Wright and his ten merry men were over the side and away.

He soon reached the Teelies and stopped, but these men seemed very excited, and brandished their clubs threateningly.

The sleigh Eskimos had also halted, and appeared to be preparing.

At that moment a battle appeared to be imminent, and, if it took place, a queer one it would be.

The Teelies were like a bull-terrier straining wildly at the end of its chain, mad to make a dash for the enemy.

And poor Wright found that, do what he might, he must speedily let them slip, then stand idly by and look on.

Donnybrook fair on an election day, or a wedding at ancient Ballyporeen, wouldn't be a circumstance to the fight that would follow.

But lo! just at that moment the Gordian knot was unexpectedly cut.

For the high sledge, with the two men in it, was seen to detach itself from the main body, and, with but four dogs harnessed thereto, was driven at tremendous speed towards the *Walrus*.

Speed was slackened, however, before it got much over half-way, and now the faces and figures of the men on board could be distinctly seen.

And Captain Mayne Brace and his crew stared silently and wonderingly.

These men were evidently not Eskimos, far less were they savages. One was very tall and squarely built, and, had he not been so dark in skin, would have been very handsome.

His companion was evidently very short, but as broad in the beam as any athlete would care to be.

Both were armed with rifles, but these were slung carelessly in front of the sledge.

Presently they were close at hand. Then the taller of the two, who had been driving, ordered the dogs to "down-charge," and threw the reins to his companion.

When he stood erect on the snow, with his spear-like pole in his left hand, and pulled his skin hood off, the volume of long dark brown hair that tumbled down over his shoulders, his splendid fur-clad figure and dignity of bearing, would have brought down the house in any theatre.

Then he tossed his head, and shook back his locks.

"Ingomar, sir, at your service!" he said, smiling.

The captain stood in the gangway.

"Ingomar, is it?" he said, smiling in turn. "Well, indeed, you look it, young fellow. But won't Ingomar honour us with his presence on board?" he added.

“With pleasure, captain; and, come to think of it, that is what brought me here.”

Almost ignoring the assistance of the Jacob’s ladder thrown to him, he swung himself easily on board, and stood before them all.

“Heigho!” he said. “This *is* a nice wind-up to a windy day. What will happen next, I wonder?”

Boy-like, Charlie at once stepped forward and shook Ingomar by the hand. Boys all love heroes. So do men, only they don’t like to show it.

“I’m sure,” said Charlie, impulsively, “uncle will make you welcome.”

“Hurrah!” cried the men.

“Your welcome, young sir,” said Mayne Brace, “shall be second only to that we gave the sun, as soon as we know a little about you, and what you desire.”

“Prettily spoken, captain. Forgive my familiarity. And I tell you straight, gentlemen, that what I desire most at the present moment is a piece of soap, a basin of water, and three towels. This hospitality to be followed, if you’ll be so good—and, being British, you are bound to be—by a good square meal and a cigar!”

Charlie would have led Ingomar straight away down to his own cabin on the spur of the moment. But Ingomar held back.

“No,” he said politely, “let me wash—scrub, if

you like it better—forward at the fo’c’sle. Every day for six months I have stripped, and my body has been scoured with snow. But my face——”

“Here you are, sir. Follow me!” This from one of the men, who had brought a wooden, rope-handled bucket of steaming water.

Ingomar was conducted to the half-deck, and, when he emerged, but for his romantic dress of skins, no one would have known him.

The skin, even of his hands, was now as white as a lady’s, and his complexion perfect.

And his every action, movement, and sentence were those of a well-bred man of the world.

He looked about ten years younger than he did when he stepped on board.

“By the way, Captain—eh——”

“Mayne Brace,” said Charlie.

“Captain Mayne Brace, I have been dreaming for weeks in my tent, far away over the hills yonder, that I was sailing southwards in a British barque. The fact is, sir, though life in these regions may have a spice of romance about it, one gets tired after a time of the winter’s darkness; and a diet of dried fish, seal-mutton, and whale-blubber becomes irksome at last, even if a bear-steak is now and then added to the *menu*.

“Do you know, sir,” he added, interrupting himself, “that if your tailor could make me a serge suit

of some sort, and if I had my hair cut, I'd really have the audacity to ask you to grant me a passage back to temperate regions with you?"

"We will be delighted, Ingomar," from the captain.

"Oh, that isn't my name, but the name of the play in which I last took part in a Chicago theatre. But I should be glad to tell you who and what I am after I have munched a ship biscuit."

As they went below to dinner, Captain Brace leaving orders for the man in the sledge and the dogs also, to be fed, Charlie found time to seize Ingomar's hand again and pull himself up, while he whispered—

"Don't nave your hair cut, and don't wear a serge suit. You look ever so much better in skins."

* * * * *

After dinner Ingomar consented to sit in an easy-chair, but well away from the fire.

He lit his cigar.

"I'm very happy, Captain Brace," he said.

"So pleased!" said Brace.

"You promised to tell us your story," said Charlie.

"Well, yes," returned the stranger, "and for your sake I'm sorry it must be brief. But, Captain Brace, may I first go and give Humpty Dumpty his orders, if I am to sleep on board all night?"

"Humpty Dumpty, as you call him, is perhaps, like yourself, an Englishman?"

"Oh, pardon me, captain, but neither Humpty nor I have the honour to be English. I am an American, sir, born and bred, and so is my mate. I don't drawl, and I don't 'guess' and 'calculate,' and I don't use my nose much to talk with. Humpty does a little. But Humpty Dumpty was only a man before the mast when we became first acquainted. I'll run up and speak to him over the side."

"No, no," cried the captain. "We'll have Humpty down here for a minute."

"What a strange name!" said Walt.

"Well, yes, but it fits him. It fits his shape and build. His real name is a deal too—a—aristocratic, don't you call it, for him. Hampden is his surname, so I call him Humpty Dumpty for short."

"Hullo, here he is!"

Humpty stood in the doorway, cap in hand.

He was about five feet or less in height, and in his Eskimo dress, with his tremendous breadth of shoulder, shaped somewhat like the capital letter V.

"You called me, sir?"

"Um, yes, Humpty. You are to drive back to our tribe, and tell them they must get away over

the horizon again and camp there, but to return to-morrow before sunrise, because I believe these young gentlemen would like to ride in a dog-sledge, and see the village of which I am king."

"Oh!" from both boys.

"Right, sir; I'm off straight's an arrow."

"One minute, Mr. Hampden. You'll have a glass of wine?"

"Excuse me, capen, but I've tasted it before, I reckon. Yes, sirree, once I took a thimbleful too much, and next day, sez I to myself, 'No more liquor for Dumpty.'"

In a minute or two after this Dumpty was dashing over the snow to the spot where his tribe had been left.

The doctor entered now.

The steward had kept his dinner hot.

"The Teelies have gone back, sir, and peace is restored."

He bowed and smiled to Ingomar, then sat down to dinner; but while he ate, only ordinary subjects were talked about.

Then Wright joined the circle round the fire, and, having cleared away, the steward considered himself privileged to stand in the doorway for a short time to listen.

For on board Arctic ships faithful servants are

allowed quite a deal of freedom, which, by the way, I have never known them abuse.

“Well, my friends,” said Ingomar, “you must excuse my shortcomings as a story-teller. I suppose I’m not old enough to tell fibs, so my yarn, if short and stupid, has at least truthfulness in its favour.”

“Heave round, sir,” said Captain Mayne Brace. And Ingomar, smiling, obeyed.

CHAPTER III

"MY PRIDE WARRED AGAINST MY BETTER FEELINGS"

"Well, gentlemen, Ingomar being merely my stage name because I played in that piece more than in any other, I ought at the very offset to tell you my baptismal one. That was Hans, and my father being an Armstrong, I very naturally adopted his surname. Hans Armstrong, then ; and here you have me clad in skins, of which rig-out I am beginning to be slightly ashamed."

"Pardon me," said Captain Brace, "you tell us that you belonged to Chicago. Do you happen to have any personal acquaintance with the Dutch-American millionaire Armstrong?"

"I have known that gentleman, sir, since I was eighteen inches long. He wasn't much of a millionaire then. I do myself the honour of believing that it was I who brought all the good luck to that well-known family ; and although when I was a child Mrs. A. occasionally showed her extreme affection by spanking me, I loved and love her very much.

If alive, young gentlemen, she is my mother; if dead, she is a saint in heaven. They have just one other child, a girl, my dear sister Marie, years younger than myself, and she will fall heir some day, I suppose, to all my father's millions."

"But you yourself, Hans?"

"Well, sir, I—I suppose I am a fool, sir, or, more probably, a born idiot. I am likewise the prodigal son. For the last six months and over I have not certainly been eating husks with the swine. It would be wrong and cowardly in me to allude to my friends the Yak-Yaks as swine; but I have been living, as I have already told you, in a somewhat unrefined way.

"The Armstrongs, I think I have heard my father say, first went to Britain and settled there, then across the sea to America, and fought against you during the War of Independence. But that has nothing whatever to do with me. My parents have been very, very good to me, and my education has been quite up to the Boston standard. Only when I reached the advanced age of seventeen—I am now two and twenty—I began to grow reckless. Civilization was not good enough for me. It was too much in the same groove. I determined therefore to shake the dust of Chicago off my shoes—there *is* a good deal of dust in Chicago—and find my way into regions remote, where, if the people were not

rich, they were at least honest. My sister's wild entreaties, my mother's tears, prevailed not against my headstrong self.

"My adventures among the Rocky Mountains and forests of the Far West would fill a book. I thought seriously of living in the wilds for life, and marrying the daughter of a chief.

"He was ugly enough to have stopped a clock, but a splendid warrior, and his braves were all that braves should be. Cheena, the daughter, was but a child of twelve. But she interested and amused me, and perhaps captivated me with her beauty and her innocent ways. One of these innocent ways was to play with snakes. She even taught me to boldly touch and handle the rattler.

"No wild beast would harm Cheena, and she went fearlessly into the dens of even grizzly bears, and played with their puppies as if they had been dolls.

"I lived in the wilds with this wandering tribe for nearly three happy years. Cheena knew English, and I taught her more. Shakespeare was my constant companion. Better perhaps had it been my Bible. But Cheena and I played many a scene together in glades of the beautiful forest.

"I must hurry over all this, though.

"Well, one day, with three men and two tame wolves, I went away on a big shoot. When we returned, I found that a warlike tribe had attacked

the chief's camp, and that he and his braves had been defeated and scattered.

"I never saw him again, nor poor Cheena, though I wandered about in search of them for three long, dreary months.

"Then one day I returned to my father's house. It was late at night, but I climbed up into my own old bedroom, just as I used to do when a lad.

"Nothing was changed. Everything had been kept sacred as a temple.

"I went quietly to bed, and when next morning I coolly rang for water and old Roberts entered, he shook with fear so that he would have fallen had I not supported him.

" 'Is—it—you, Master Hans?' he quavered, 'and not a dead—go—go—ghost?'

" 'Is that like the hand of a dead go—go—ghost, Roberts?' I said, grasping his arm with my forest-hardened fingers.

" 'Oh—no—no,' he almost shrieked. 'Lor, sir, how you've growed! Your mother and Sissie will be skeered, I guess, when they sees you.'

" 'And they are all well?'

" 'That's so, Master Hans; and the old man too.'

" 'Well, some hot water, Roberts. I'll wash and come downstairs to breakfast.'

"I was down before anybody, and sitting quietly

in a rocker, smoking one of dad's best Havanas, when Sissie and mother entered.

"You may judge what followed, boys."

"But," pleaded Charlie, "you're not making the story half long enough."

"I settled down now, sir, to the hardest work ever I had in my life."

"And that was?"

"Doing nothing. But I couldn't keep it up. It was ruining my fine constitution."

"I was always fond of the stage, and took Marie to see *Ingomar* one evening."

"She was delighted. I was not. *Ingomar* was not written by Shakespeare, I believe, but it was a pet play of mine, and I knew I could act the part better."

"But somehow I went back several nights running. Then, as my good or my bad fortune would have it, one evening the excited manager rushed before the screen to announce that, to his grief and chagrin, the principal actor had been taken suddenly ill, and that the play could not be put on. Yes, of course, he added, the gate-money would be refunded."

"After this, some impulse seized me. I stood boldly up in the box, and shouted with arm extended—

"'Stay, I know the part, and if the manager will but give me a chance, I will try my best.'"

"Every eye was turned towards my box, while Sissie shrank behind the curtain. I am told, sir, that I am not bad looking, and my figure is fairly good.

"There was a wild 'Hooray!' now, at all events, and that evening found me before the footlights.

"I played with heart and soul. I had the people with me, and felt I had ; and when at the end of the first act I was called before the curtain, I received an ovation that would have satisfied a far better actor than I.

"Hardly thinking about the disgrace my people would imagine I was bringing on them, I accepted the manager's terms to play for three weeks.

"I told them that night what I had done. Mother was silent, Sissie looked frightened ; and when next morning we all met at breakfast, I could see that both had been crying.

"Scarcely a word was said, but that forenoon my father asked me into his sanctum.

"'Boy, boy,' he began, 'why this madness? Do you wish to bring my grey hairs down with sorrow to the grave?'

"I sat quietly down that our eyes might be more on a level, for I am very tall.

"'Dear father,' I said, 'I am foolish enough to think that I shall be an honour to you as an actor.'

"'Honour! Actor!' he cried.

"'It is a noble profession,' I said quietly ; 'and

when you come to listen to my interpretation of *Hamlet*, you will believe that God has gifted your son with genius. There will be no sorrow then, dear daddy.

"'Besides,' I added mischievously, 'you haven't got a single solitary grey hair in head or whiskers.'

"Some people are hard to convince. My father is one of them.

"'I will cut you off with a dollar,' he thundered, 'if you do not give up this disgraceful fad. If you do I will take you into partnership.'

"Then I told him grandiosely that the resolution I had taken was fixed, immutable; but that rather than bring disgrace upon him, I would change my name as soon as this engagement was over, and go into a far country to act where no one would know me.

"'I began life,' he said, as he sunk back in his chair, 'with fourpence in my pocket.'

"'And I, daddy,' I replied, 'am beginning life' without a penny, but possessed of one of the dearest old fathers that ever a young man was gifted with.'

"He was softened.

"'Boy,' he said, after a pause, 'I am wealthy, but your sister must be my heir. If you must go—then go. I will place a trifle at your disposal in my bank at New York. You will have that to fall back upon, when your fad and folly leave you. Good-bye. I may never see you more.'

"He started from his chair and marched straight out of the room.

"Here, boys, ends the second act of the prodigal son.

"Just two months after this I found that my father's words were coming true. I had attempted *Hamlet*, but was playing to very poor houses.

"When I came home one evening and found a very humble dinner waiting for me, I became very sad indeed.

"But worse was to follow, for in a week's time my engagement at the theatre was over, and I was politely told I was not good business, and could not be retained.

"I went quietly and, I thought, calmly away; but happening to enter a club that evening where my presence had always been welcome before, I found only coldness. When a rival actor taunted me as to my success, I completely lost control of myself. I flew at the fellow, picked him up, armchair and all, and threw him to the other side of the room.

"I heard no more of the matter, but in a week's time I found myself alone in my dingy lodgings without a copper in my pocket.

"I was alone with my pride. I might beg, but never again, I told myself, would I darken my father's door.

"It was two days after this when, while strolling

along near to the docks, I was met by a French seafaring man. He looked at me and I at him.

"‘Do you want work?’ he asked.

"‘That I do. I’ll do anything.’

"‘Well, you look a likely sportsman. I’m off in a day or two on a curious kind of cruise to the very far north.’

"‘I’ll go with you,’ I answered, ‘if the wages are not starvation.’

"‘Come with me now,’ he said. ‘We will soon settle matters.’

"He had a boat, and we were both rowed off to a strange-looking but strong and sturdy brig.

"Every man on board except this same Humpty Dumpty was French. What cared I? Surely I could hold my own in a fight against a score of little sailors.

"‘You are not a sailor,’ said my new friend, when we were together in his little cabin.

"‘No,’ I said; ‘but I can shoot, and wield an axe, and I can fish.’

"‘You’re my man. But I must explain. We are engaged by a celebrated firm of chemists to go to Greenland waters and fish for sharks. The oil of the livers is not only finer and richer but more abundant than that of the cod, and it is considered an infallible cure for consumption.

"‘You’ll have to rough it,’ he added.

“‘Thank God to have the chance.’

“And the bargain was speedily made, and the articles signed.

“I was to join in two days’ time.

“That night it suddenly occurred to me to visit my father’s bank here. I still had his letter, and by its aid could identify myself.

“I must confess that I went to that bank in bitterness of spirit against my poor daddy. But I felt sure that the trifle he had deposited to my credit, would be but the traditional dollar with which prodigal sons are often cut off. I meant to bore a hole in it, and wear it round my neck.

“I had no sooner made myself known than the manager, to my great surprise, shook me by the hand.

“‘Come into my room,’ he said. ‘Your father has sent me your photograph, so that there is no need for identification. And the cheque is a handsome one.’

“‘I hope, sir,’ I said, ‘you will not tantalize me. I expect nothing from my father except one dollar.’

“‘The cash standing to your credit,’ he said, ‘is two millions sterling.’

“I answered scarcely a word. I was too dazed to speak. This, then, was the dollar with which my father had cut me off.

“I arose from my chair, and, hardly taking time

to shake hands with this business-like banker, I walked straight out, and away home to my dingy, dismal lodgings.

"I wanted to think, and to be alone.

"'My poor father!' These were the first words I said to myself. And at this moment I would have given a good deal to be sitting once more in our old-fashioned parlour, with mother and sister near me, and my father studying the markets as he sat in his chair.

"But evil thoughts began to take the place of good, and my pride warred against my better feelings.

"These two millions were a million times more than I deserved, though it would leave him but little poorer. This was true, but nevertheless I felt that I was cut off.

"'Here is thy portion, boy,' he seemed to have said. 'Get thee away into a far country, and come not near us again.'

"I was banished. I would keep to my engagement with the French shark-hunter strictly and to the letter. My millions might lie there. I would not draw a cheque even for a dollar. I was proud, and my pride bred bitterness of heart.

"I wrote at least half a dozen letters to Sissie and mother, read them over, and tore them up as soon as penned. For somehow that bitterness of heart breathed all through each one of them.

"Then, when calmer, I wrote one simple, loving letter, bidding all good-bye. And it ended thus: 'When I am worthy to be my good old father's son I will return.'"

* * * * *

"Ah, gentlemen," he continued, after a pause of silence that no one cared to break, "my long banishment to this dreary country, though self-inflicted, has done me good and changed my mind. Before, I could see men but as trees walking, *now* I can read all my father's motives. Like all our forbears, he is proud, but he is true, and—well, I must confess I love him. There!

"My adventures since I left home are too numerous to tell you. Our ship was wrecked, and Dumpty and I alone were saved. Then I joined a band of wandering Eskimos—the Yak-Yaks. I did not care what became of me. I felt I was running away from myself, from my evil, prideful nature, and so here I am, a changed and, I trust, a better man.

"One thing, however, I have determined upon. I will not return to my father's house, until I have done something which shall show him that I possess some of the sand and grit in me, which has descended to us from the old fighting Armstrongs.

"But, I say," he added comically, "you will get me that serge suit, won't you? And you will let me and Humpty Dumpty join your ship, and let me have my

hair cut, and—well, and just share your adventures, won't you?"

"By all means," replied Captain Mayne Brace.

"One minute before you finally decide," said Ingomar. "For all you know, I may be a mere adventurer or a madman. But see, I have some business-like method in my madness."

He pulled from an inside pouch a bundle of papers.

"I have kept these, Captain Brace. I place them before you, and, unless you promise me you will glance over them, I shall return to-morrow to my igloo among the Yak-Yaks, and trouble you no more."

"I will take them to my cabin, young sir, though I think there is no need to. I can read honesty in your eyes."

Ingomar's manner changed now at once. He was brimful of happiness apparently, and addressed himself more to the boys than the others.

"I say, lads," he cried, "won't we have a day of it to-morrow, if your good captain will permit you to cross the mountains with me?"

"Oh, we shall enjoy it!" cried Charlie.

"Won't we just," said Walt.

"I've never driven dogs, but I think I could if I tried."

"Hurrah!"

And the evening passed very happily away.

CHAPTER IV

THE AGREEMENT DRAWN UP AND SIGNED

Like all men who are ever likely to do any good in this world, and leave footsteps in the sands of time, Captain Mayne Brace was an early riser.

The stars were still glowing like diamonds in the sky, then, and the merry dancers—the aurora—were still at their revels when he turned out to have his bath. A quarter of an hour after this found him on deck.

Here, to his surprise, he met young Ingomar. He stood on the poop, his face skywards and to the north.

“Is it not a grand sight, sir?” he said. “How near and how brightly these stars and planets burn! It seems as if one could touch them with one’s rifle or fishing-rod. And the aurora-gleams—the positive magnetism that comes from the far-off Southern Pole—how beautiful their transparency of colours! Those ribbons of light seem to me like living things. And in the stillness of this early morning do you not hear them talking? Shsh—shs—shs—shs! Oh,

sir, is it not God Himself who is speaking there—the God of power, the God we know so little of, the God whom in our pride of knowledge we sometimes venture to impugn, to correct, to criticize! Forgive me, sir, for speaking thus before an older man than myself. *But* oh, sir, there is a glamour about that sky, about these northern solitary wilds, which gets around the heart and soul, and makes one feel one is really face to face with the Creator—Maker not alone of this puny earth, but of yonder universe—of infinity itself!”

He scarcely gave Captain Brace time to reply.

“Down in one’s bunk,” he continued, “one belongs to this world. Up here among the stars and aurora one is with God. But down below last night, sir, I was thinking of my father, my mother, and sister. To say that I was not longing a little for home would be to insinuate that I was more than a young man. Yet my resolution has not been one whit shaken. When I can do something that no one else has ever yet done, or at least made an attempt to do this something, the prodigal son will return to his father’s house; not till then. My father is a very Napoleon of finance. In that line I may never, *can* never, hope to equal him, nor do I desire to do so. Yet I may become a great explorer, and help to add to the world’s fund of knowledge for the world’s benefit.

"I had made up my mind never to finger a frank of those two millions, but I shall, and will gladly, spend one million, if need be, for the furtherance of a plan I have in view, and have well thought out. It is an ambitious one, sir. I feel I ought to blush even to mention it."

"You need not, young sir, if it be honourable," said Brace.

Ingomar, as we may continue to call him, had been walking up and down the deck so rapidly, that it was difficult to keep pace with his gigantic strides.

But he hove to now suddenly, and confronted the captain.

"Listen," he said. "The Americans have done as much as any other nation save Britain to solve the mystery that hangs around the Pole yonder. The veil will soon be raised. *I* would go farther; I would venture to aid in the attempts that are now about to be made by you Britishers and by the Germans, to wrench its secrets from the Great Unknown, from the Antarctic itself, to force it to tell what it knows of the story of the earth."

"The ambition," said the captain, "is a noble one, certainly, and even I have had thoughts of bringing the knowledge I have gained in regions round our own North Pole to bear upon the South. Indeed, I was almost thinking of joining the expedition when I got home."

"But I," said Ingomar, "would not join any expedition. No, no, sir, and a thousand 'No's.' I should fit out my own. And if I were to die in the attempt, why, I should die in a worthy cause; and to youth death does not seem so very dreadful if surrounded by a halo of noble adventure.

"And would you believe it," he went on, "while in my lonesome igloo over the hills yonder, I have for months been forming all my plans for future operation. I would rather lay these before older and more skilled and scientific men than myself, and all I should do, all the honour I might obtain, would be that of finding the money for the expedition.

"Well, now, it may seem an abrupt question to ask, but I think that as long as a fellow keeps a clear brain and a good look-out ahead, abruptness is no great sin. Can you, then, or will you, sell me your ship?"

"This barque is not my own, alas! or, after having been so singularly unfortunate in 'making a voyage,'* and presuming that you are sincere, I would gladly do so on the understanding that my services as master mariner of the *Walrus* should be retained. But come down below. The fire is well alight, and we can talk uninterruptedly for a good hour yet before the others turn out."

Although the acquaintance with each other of

* "Making a voyage" (Greenlandish) = secure a good cargo.

these two men was so very recent, there was a something—call it by any scientific name you please—that seemed to draw them together.

Captain Mayne Brace was very favourably impressed by the prodigal son, as he would insist upon calling himself. The coincidence that had brought them together was certainly strange, but Fate moves in a mysterious way, and Brace determined to take advantage of the meeting between Ingomar and himself.

He candidly opened his mind to the young millionaire.

"I am bound," he said, "to do all I can to secure a good voyage during the spring fishery. Nothing could prevent me from attempting this for the benefit of my owners; and if I must return 'a clean ship,' then I shall have to steel my nerves to encounter my owners. The ship is well—too well—insured, and it was hinted to me that if I failed in making a paying voyage, no questions would be asked if I cast her away. There would be little chance of that, for even after a rough-and-tumble life at sea for so many years, I have a little honour left me, a clean heart, and a clear conscience.

"But, Mr. Armstrong——"

"Call me not Armstrong yet, sir—just Ingomar, and hang the 'Mr.'"

"Well, Ingomar, I have no doubt my owners

would be willing to sell the *Walrus*, and therefore, if you choose now to sign articles, I shall rate you as harpooner, and shall be perfectly willing to ship for you, before we leave these regions, the Yak-Yaks, the dogs, and young bears you say would be necessary to make our expedition a success.

"We are a sturdy ship and good sailer, and we have plenty of room, if we do not make a voyage, for you and your pets."

"You have made me very happy, sir. Let us make the agreement at once."

"Just one moment, young sir. You have told me that the *Walrus* will be the auxiliary vessel carrying extra stores, the dogs, the Yak-Yak hunters, sledges, etc., and that you would build or buy and fit out a special ship for the actual scientific exploration. Now, I am a plain man—under what flag should we sail?"

"The Stars and Stripes?" said Ingomar.

This was more like a question than an answer, and Brace replied sturdily—

"No, sir. *I* will sail under no flag except the British.

‘The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze.’

But," he added, half regretfully, "if you succeed in purchasing this good barque—and a better never

sailed to the Sea of Ice—she will belong to you, and you can hoist your Stars and Stripes ; only——”

“I understand,” said Ingomar, “and honour your sentiment. Well, you must be captain of the *Walrus*, that is clear. But everything else must be made clear, and I am certain we will not quarrel about the flag displayed.”

He considered a moment.

“Let us have the two in one,” he said. “Not one beneath the other, else we should quarrel worse than ever.”

He laughed at his own quaint notion, as he added—

“Why not have the two flags tacked together, so that their united ensign should show from one side the Bird of Freedom—the eagle, and on the other your British batch of Lions?”

It was Captain Brace’s turn to laugh now, and he did so right heartily.

“’Pon my soul,” he said, “the conceit is a good one. I see that you and I, sir, are united, anyhow—just as the British and the Americans should ever be.”

Then the agreement was drawn up and signed by both, and so this memorable interview came to a close.

“I feel so happy now, captain,” said young Ingomar, “that—that I could cry.”

"Rather an original method of showing happiness, isn't it?"

"Rather effeminate, anyhow. But now I feel at home here; and within the last four and twenty hours my prospects in life have brightened, and my sky is clear; the star of hope is shining as brightly as the Pole star yonder. I'm young, you see, sir, and—— Well, I can't help that, can I, Captain Brace? But I don't mean to fail, anyhow."

"No; and you have nothing to be ashamed of, Ingomar. As to failure——

'In the lexicon of youth which fate reserves
For a bright manhood, there is no such word
As Fail.'"

* * * * *

True to time—in fact, a little before it—the Yak-Yaks were seen returning to the barque, yelling and whooping, the dogs stretched out, and apparently hugging the snow as they sped onwards like a hairy hurricane across the level stretch of bay.

It was arranged that Nick and Nora both should accompany this tour inland, but as they could not be expected to keep pace with these trained Arctic dogs, one was taken up into Captain Brace's sledge, and the other with the boys themselves in Ingomar's.

Food was not forgotten, you may be well sure, nor tobacco and knickknacks for the natives.

The journey was a long one, and many a halt had to be made on hill-tops, and even in the valleys beneath.

No one who has not travelled in a real Eskimo well-appointed dog-sleigh can have the faintest notion of the speed obtained on good snow.

To-day it seemed as if the drivers were bent upon making a record, and it was one that I would defy any motor-car to make over the same track. The dogs needed to rest now and then, to lie down and pant a little, and refresh themselves by gulping down mouthfuls of the pure snow that was within easy reach.

Then they were fit again once more.

Though it was but little past one o'clock p.m., the sun was already going down when the halt for luncheon was called; and it need hardly be said that under so bracing a sky our travellers made each a hearty meal.

They were high up on a rounded hill, and the view all around from the rugged mountains of the west to the east, where lay the rough and rugged sea of ice, was indescribably beautiful.

Even the Yak-Yaks themselves seemed impressed with the transcendent loveliness of this marvellous Arctic sunset, and those moments of such stillness and silence that one might have heard a snowflake fall.

It was night and starlight before they reached the Eskimo village.

A moon by this time had risen solemnly over the hills, and flooded all the country with its strange, mysterious light—a light the like of which I have seen in no land save the Arctic, a light that seems mystic and positively holy.

All the inhabitants turned out to welcome our heroes, and a wild, strange welcome it was.

This was a wandering tribe, and consequently a more brave and fearless people than the inhabitants of the igloo villages around the coast.

But they were safe; and they looked upon Ingo-mar as their sun-king, as in their musical, labial language they expressed it.

This tribe might have numbered altogether some six or seven hundred souls, and I may as well tell the truth about them—they never fished for blubber themselves, but levied blackmail on their humbler and more industrious neighbours who lived along the shores of gulfs and bays.

They had very large stores of frozen blubber, however, thousands of skins, and plenty of stored fish, and flesh of every sort, from seagulls' to whales'.

Stimulants in the shape of rum or brandy I do not believe they ever tasted, but they seemed all the more happy in consequence.

Ingomar strode round among them, and even the children ran towards him to kiss his hand. Nay, more, the very dogs danced about him, but "down-charged" whenever he lifted his hand.

It was a queer sight to see the splendid jet-black Newfoundland standing close by his Nora's side and defying the whole howling pack, turning his head sideways now and then to give Nora a lick, as much as to say, "Don't be afraid, my dear; they're only ignorant savages. I could fight them six at a time."

The night was to be one of hard frost; but these nomads, much to our heroes' astonishment, lit a great fire of ancient pine wood, which they had excavated from a hillside not far off, and so John Frost was defied for once.

The arrival of real "Eengleeshmen" at their winter camp was an event that no one would ever forget.

Though, in a manner of speaking, warlike in comparison to the ordinary Eskimos, these Yak-Yaks seemed very gentle and tractable, and did all in their power to entertain their guests. They sang queer little musical ditties, and the men and women joined in every chorus, clapping knees and brows with their palms in quite a funny way.

Then some of the head hunters gave a kind of dramatic performance, spear-armed; and even Charlie

and Walter could see that this represented every phase of a great bear-hunt, even to the slaying of Bruin, and the death of one of the hunters.

Then Ingomar himself took the snowy stage, and if he had been listened to with the same rapt attention in New York that he was to-night by these semi-savages, the probability is that he never would have left his own country.

Ingomar's igloo was a very large one, and in it burned two huge lamps, giving plenty of heat and light. There was no smoke, because that which arose from the oil was carried right up through, and though all the whites slept here in their bear and seal-skins, there was not a particle of discomfort felt.

And all slumbered well till eight o'clock next morning.

The fire was now replenished, and smoked fish made a right dainty addition to the breakfast. The *menu* was certainly not so extensive as that of a Glasgow or London hotel, but our heroes sat down to it with hearty appetites, and that is more than most people can boast of in gloomy London town.

A surprise was awaiting them this morning, of which Ingomar had given the visitors no previous hint.

CHAPTER V

THE SHIP'S BEARS: GRUFF, AND GROWLEY, AND GRUMPEY, AND MEG

The surprise was this: no fewer than four young Greenland bears * were led forth, and attached or harnessed to a hugely large sledge, and seemed so perfectly quiet and well broken, that neither Charlie nor Walt hesitated for a moment to take their seats.

This sleigh could accommodate as many as ten men.

But these bears, although they moved not with half the rapidity of a team of dogs, never varied their pace, and never needed rest until they had covered a distance of not less than twelve miles.

Both the Newfoundlands had been shut up in an igloo. This was a precautionary measure, for although the bears never attempted to molest the Yak-dogs, they might not have objected to a mouthful or two of fine, fresh Newfoundland.

And the end of it all was that Captain Mayne

* Young bears are now regularly trained by the Eskimos for heavy sleigh work.

Brace considered himself quite justified in purchasing these noble animals, for if anything came of the proposed Antarctic expedition, there was no reason why they should not be taken south with the force.

The days grew longer and longer now, fresh snow fell, softer winds began to blow, and at long last, with noises that are indescribable, the ice all around began to crack and break with the force of great waves that rolled in beneath them from the Eastern ocean.

Previous to this, however, peace had been established between the Yak-Yaks and the Teelies. The former had encamped close to the bay, and plenty of provisions and necessaries having been landed, Humpty Dumpty himself was left in charge of the whole—a kind of white king, in fact, who considered himself of no small importance. He had orders to keep the peace until the *Walrus* should return after the spring fishing.

The sun was now shining nineteen hours out of the twenty-four, and soon it would rise not to set again for months ; and so one glorious morning sail was set, and the *Walrus*, scorning the lesser bay-bergs, went ploughing her way slowly seawards, and in good time reached the whaling grounds.

If Captain Mayne Brace had come to these northern seas merely for sport and pleasure, he might have had plenty of both. There were seals

enough, though rather scattered ; there were bears in abundance, strolling defiantly on their native ice, or buffeting the billows in search of pastures new ; there were bladder-noses, sharks in scores—oh, in shoals sometimes—walruses on the ice and in the water, lonely unicorns, and those marvellous narwhals that go plunging about, and always seem to be going somewhere on particular business, but never getting there. Yet glorious times of it the beasts have for all that when they reach shoal water, and can spear with their wonderful weapons the flat fish and skates that there do dwell. For my own part I should rather like to be a narwhal for a month or two in summer. Hammer-headed sharks, too, there were, those hideous zygænas, and birds in millions ; but, alas, for Brace's pretty barque and her greedy owners, hardly ever was a true Greenland whale seen or tackled.

And so when the season was waxing to a close, and these monster whales had babies of their own with which they departed southward to warmer seas, for their children's sake, Captain Brace determined one morning that it was time to bear up once more for Britain's shores.

Of course the men were down-hearted, because many of them had families to provide for, and did not want to return with empty pockets. But "better luck next" is the motto of your Arctic sailor ; and

when Brace, their well-beloved skipper, told them that there was considerable probability that many of them—if they chose to volunteer—would be engaged for an expedition to the Southern Pole, they regained heart, and made the welkin ring with their lusty cheers.

When the *Walrus* arrived at last at Incognita Bay, and the anchor was let go in a cosy corner, as near to the shore as they could venture with safety, preparations were immediately commenced, first, for the shipment of huge blocks of fresh-water ice, and afterwards, for the embarkation of the dogs and Yak-Yaks they were to take southwards with them.

The bears were going to be the great difficulty. They were splendidly trained, it is true. But then they were but young ; and who could say that they might not, when at sea, kick over the traces, eat their Yak-Yak keepers, and become frantically unmanageable ?

The whole of the fo'cas'le was turned into a huge bear-den for their accommodation, and seal-meat in abundance was lowered into an ice-tank, that, during their long voyage, they might not starve.

It was a happy thought of Slap-dash, a brave Innuït and chief keeper of the bears, to have trained three of the Yak-dogs to sleep with his monster pets. The bears had become very fond of these, and growled a good deal at each other over them at night, but never actually fought.

But for these honest dogs the shipment of the Bruins would have presented far greater difficulties.

I must describe how this shipment was actually effected. To have roped the poor beasts would have rendered them savage, and this would have been rather indiscreet, to say the least. So a large raft was constructed, as well as a sort of inclined plane of wood, similar to a horse's ladder. This last was made fast to the fo'cas'le bulwark above, while the other end was held in its place, on the sea below, by means of floats and beams from the ship's water-line.

The three pet dogs, the bears' favourites, were easily got on to the raft, and the Bruins followed. The Innu it himself kept feeding them as they were being towed all the way to the ship, and while the raft was made fast to the inclined plane. Then up sprang Slap-dash, and called the dogs to follow.

"Oh," said the biggest bear, whose name was Gruff, "if that's your game, here's for after."

And up he went.

In less time than it takes me to write these lines all the lot were comfortably caged.

They were not quite satisfied with their lot to begin with, however.

They had never been to sea or on board ship before in their lives, though they had been permitted to swim about the bay many times and oft, and even to stalk seals for themselves. But to be placed in a

den with strong iron stanchions before it, was a trifle more than they had bargained for.

Slap-dash was a very good master to them, however, and tried to comfort them in every way that he could. And so did the dogs.

Before I go any further let me mention that bears are almost, if not quite, as sagacious, in their own way, as cats. Yet the ways of bears are a little peculiar, and as pets—well, they are not altogether satisfactory. The reason is this: they are treated without any tact on board ship, and teased and tormented for the pleasure of hearing them growl or cough or roar. On the ice a bear simply regards a man as something to eat—not so nice, of course, as a seal, but, anyhow, a change. And so they go for the human biped when hungry—I mean when the bear is hungry. Men chase bears and kill them for sport or for their skins and paws. Bears chase men because they are wholesome eating, especially if fat, and almost everybody does get fat in the Arctic regions.

As a parlour pet, a Greenland bear would hardly be suitable for a boy, and if the boy were to take him out for an airing, say, in a city park—well, there would be fewer city babies about before he got his pet back home again.

A young Polar bear, with whom I was shipmate once upon a time, pawed me in fun one day, and the barque giving a bit of a lee lurch, I fell. Instead of

waiting till I got up out of the scuppers, the young rascal went for my leg, and I had to wriggle out of one sea-boot and skip. I never saw that boot again, so I imagine he devoured it. On the whole, then, if you hanker after a white ice-bear as a pet, you had better think of probable consequences, for his immense size makes him an awkward customer in many ways.

But, mind this, the Polar bear *is* to be won by kindness, and when so won, he will never harm *you*, but always make a point of swallowing the other boy. And that is really very good of the bear, especially if the other boy has been nasty with you some time before this.

It took all the tact of which the brave Innuit was possessed to get those beautiful bears settled down in their quarters, but it was soon evident enough that they were going to be real ship's pets.

A little doubtful at first they were as to Walter's and Charlie's intentions when the boys brought them biscuits and tit-bits from the cabin. Instinct seemed to account for this. Bears become much sooner attached to savages than they do to white men, for whenever the latter appear, their principal object seems to be to torment and torture or get fun out of the animals they subdue. Savages are, as a rule, far more kind to the animals than those creatures who call themselves Christians, but are not.

It was not long, however, before the bears began to take a different view of the pale-faces on board. They might, they seemed to think, turn out better than they looked, although tradition or something else told them that it was those very bipeds who had hunted and chased and killed with fire-sticks (guns) their ancestors from time immemorial, and who added insult to injury by placing them in barrels and casks with bars in front for men to torture and boys to tease during the long and terrible voyage to Britain.

Before a week was over, the bears had quite settled down in their quarters. They had come to the conclusion that nobody here intended to do them any harm. Perhaps they had heard kind and thoughtful Captain Brace give orders that no one should molest them. Over and above this, the wise animals had soon found out that the food was better than any they had ever had on shore, and that ship's biscuit is even more toothsome than white-man steak.

Besides, every forenoon they were allowed out to have a run round the decks under the guardianship of the brave Innuït Slap-dash. A most fearless fellow was this same Innuït, and in intellect as well as in every manly quality infinitely above his fellows.

But whenever the bo's'n piped, "Bears to dance

and play. Out of the way all you lads as doesn't want to be 'ugged," most of the crew who weren't on shore dived down below and pulled the hatches to. But several who wanted to see the fun, took to the rigging and to the main top or fore.

Nick also went below, and took his wife with him.

"There's too much bear there for us to eat, Nora," Nick seemed to say. "Besides, my dear, discretion is the better part of valour."

The bears' names were Gruff, and Growley, and Grumpey, and Meg.

And Growley was Gruff's wife, and Grumpey had married Meg, so to speak.

But Gruff ruled the roost, and would have nailed the roast, too, had he got a chance.

Whenever they were let out of their den, they used to shuffle right away aft all in a row, with their noses in the air and sniffing—ten yards by two of solid bear.

The boys were already on top of the skylight, with bones and biscuits and all things good and tasty; and the bears stood alongside with great open mouths to be fed. It was Gruff's privilege to have the very last bite, and then to take his wife away; but if Growley did not follow immediately, Gruff went back and gave Growley a wallop with his great paw that landed her in the lee-scuppers.

Then the fun began. All sorts of fun, in fact. They ran and they danced, and stood on end and played at leap-frog, coughing and roaring all the time like a dozen steam-hooters. Gruff had a habit of standing on his head and then rolling clean over. When his body came down with a thud on the deck, the ship shivered as if a green sea had struck her.

This was merely one of Gruff's tricks, for the little darling thought of something fresh every morning, and some of these I shall take the liberty of mentioning further on.

In three weeks' time the good ship was ready to take her leave, and a very sad parting it was indeed for the Yak-Yaks and Teelies left behind.

Brace gave them a banquet on shore, which went far to assuage their grief, however. It was a huge cauldron of thick pea-soup, with lumps of fat pork and beef in it, and flanked with biscuits. The dessert was a couple of barrels of red herrings and a barrel of raw potatoes. These were scattered broadcast among the crowd, and to witness that scrambling and tumbling match would have wrung the tears of laughter from a coal-carter's horse.

When all sail was set and the *Walrus* began to warm to her work under the influence of a ten-knot breeze, the rigging was manned, and three lusty cheers given for the simple, friendly savages they were leaving behind in the land of perpetual

snow, and whom they could never expect to see again.

And down the wind from the tribes on shore came a long-drawn, falsetto cry of farewell. It was meant for a cheer, but sounded more like the moaning of a wintry wind.

END OF BOOK I

BOOK II

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

CHAPTER I

"AND NOW," HE SAID, "'TIS DO OR DIE"

It is true enough that Captain Mayne Brace was only a simple sailor. But if his heart was kind and soft, it was also a brave one. Nor did he lack genuine business habits, and long before the *Walrus* reached the most northerly of the Shetland Islands, he had made up his mind as to what he should do.

He was returning a clean ship. As a clean ship he had to meet his owners. He knew what that would mean. There would be no banquets in his honour at the end of this voyage, as there had been last time when he returned to Hull a bumper ship, with thousands of tons of oil below, with bings of skins on deck even, and bergs of fresh-water ice heaped 'twixt main and fore, enough to gladden the eyes of every hotel-keeper in the City, and with a lovely young Polar bear as a gift to the Lady Mayoress. No wishing him further health and fortune, no men to carry him shoulder-high to the dining-hall. *Sic transit gloria mundi* when a Greenland captain returns a clean ship, to meet with cold looks and taunts and sneers.

Honest Mayne Brace was not sure that he could face all this, so he put boldly into Lerwick, and let go the anchor opposite this quaint old town.

Everybody wanted a rest anyhow. Ingomar himself was longing to stretch his legs on shore, and the boys to ride madly over the moors on untrained and untameable Shetland ponies.

I believe the brave Yak-Yak men, with their thirty beautiful but daft dogs, and Slap-dash, with his four bears, would have all gone on shore together if invited, and taken the town by storm.

But Brace himself, with the young millionaire, went on shore, and took immediate possession of the telegraph office.

Every one knew good Brace, and lifted his hat to him, and welcomed him back from the land of ice and snow, and would fain have stopped him to chat, but he went hurrying on.

The postmaster himself shook hands effusively, and to him Brace was obliged to talk for a few minutes.

"I want you, Mr. Bryan, to let myself and my young friend here, in your presence of course, wire for a short time. It is on secret business of the greatest importance, and you know, Bryan, I am an adept at working the wires."

The postmaster was pleased, delighted, he said ; and down sat Brace, Ingomar standing by and looking amused.

The Arctic skipper summoned his owners at the Hull end, and requested them to wire him, through the medium of a confidential clerk.

When all was ready, he told them briefly the story of his misadventures, and asked for advice.

The reply was somewhat as follows, when boiled down.

"Curses on your ill luck! But why did you not obey our secret instructions?"

"Hadn't the heart nor the conscience." Thus the reply. "Requires more nerve than I have to do a thing of that kind. Would rather not stand in a felon's dock."

"You're a fool." This from Hull. "You have all but ruined your owners. We must sell the *Walrus* now, and at once."

Well, this was just the kind of message Brace half expected. And, when he read it, he burst into a joyous, hearty "Ha, ha, ha!" in which Ingomar readily joined.

Had this been the telephone, they might easily have heard that laugh at Hull. But a laugh that is merely wired is a very cold kind of an article.

"There is a gentleman," wired Brace, "whom I know, that wants a strongly built craft to cruise around Tierra del Fuego. He is in Lerwick now, and might be tempted to buy the *Walrus*, at a price."

"Tempt him, then, and be hanged to you," was clicked through.

The return clicking spelt out, "He will give two-thirds of original price, if you will dock the ship for complete repairs at Hull."

There was a long pause now. A consultation was being held. That was evident.

Then the wire rattled off, "A bargain! We will confirm our telegram by letter to-night. Good-bye, Brace, till we see you."

"Good-bye, owners. Trust no ill feeling. Will lie here a week."

Then Brace got up, and Ingomar and he shook hands.

"I have a great respect for you, Captain Brace," said Ingomar. "To look at your jolly British face, I would not have credited you with such thorough business tact and judgment. Why, it is downright Americano!"

"Thank you; and now we'll go and dine."

"One minute, my friend. Who should my banker be in London? Thanks. Well, I'll write a line to mine in New York, and they'll soon make business straight for us in old England. Ah! my dear old father will know I've turned up again, and that my pride is softened will be shown by the fact that I am drawing on my pile for £200,000. I'm like the Germans, sir. There is no use going to war unless

you've got the sinews and nerve, and we are going to war with the Antarctic Pole. There is nothing to be done without cash in this world.”

Brace's first mate, with Charlie and Walt, came on shore soon, and all repaired to the chief hotel, and no schoolboys could have enjoyed “a blow-out” more thoroughly than these five enjoyed their first dinner on land, after so long and so dreary a time in Arctic seas.

For one of the chief pleasures in a sailor's life lies in the getting back to the bonnie green shores of Britain again, after months or years of sailing on far-off foreign seas.

It was the sweet summer time now in the Shetland Isles, and our young folks enjoyed themselves as only young folks can.

They went fishing from boats and from the rocks, which are everywhere most fantastic and lovely, forming many a little lonely cave, where, on the golden sand, bask seals in blinks of sunshine.

The sea in spring and summer is nearly always blue, the breezes are balmy and bracing, and the uplands and inlands all carpeted o'er with the rarest and prettiest of wild flowers. Wild birds, too, are here, especially sea-birds, whose happy voices mingle musically with the song of the waves.

But I think that Charlie and Walt enjoyed more than anything else the bare-back rides they had on

daft and droll little Shetland ponies, with Nick and his Nora doing their best to keep up with them, which they could only do by taking all kinds of cross-cuts, and meeting their masters where least expected.

I think it was a happy thought of Ingomar's to buy and take off with them two of those ponies to assist the work of Antarctic exploration.

But come to think of it, when, weeks after this, the *Walrus*, now the property of young Ingomar, steamed into Hull, she was more of a floating menagerie than anything else.

The owners were less sulky than Brace had expected. They really did give a dinner, not only to the captain and his officers, but to all hands as well; and one of them, in a hearty speech, said, among other complimentary things, that he was sure he but expressed the sentiments of his colleagues when he told Captain Mayne Brace, whose services they were all too soon to lose, that a more clever, genial, or braver officer never steered a barque to the Polar seas. He hoped that all would join him in drinking his health, and wishing him success and safety all along on the venturesome voyage he was about to embark upon.

And all did.

* * * *

It took the whole of the autumn and winter to

build and fit out the new Arctic explorer *Sea Elephant*, for the *Walrus* was going to act more as store-ship and tender to the *Sea Elephant* than anything else. She was to be under the command of Captain Mayne Brace himself, and would take out the Yak-Yaks, the bears, and dogs, as well as an extra supply of everything that was likely to be needed during the long and terrible voyage and journey into the regions of the Great Unknown.

Captain Mayne Brace knew well what these regions were, for he had himself taken part in a German expedition that had gone out many years before, and had noted the deficiencies thereof.

So it was he alone who superintended everything.

Though aided nobly by his mate, and even his old bo's'n and his Arctic spectioneer, it was no easy task that he had set himself to perform. They were going to a great snow-clad continent, on which there are neither houses nor towns any more than there are in the moon, and everything in the shape of repairs to engines, to interior, or to any part or portion of the ship, must be done by the artificers, mechanics, and engineers whom he must carry.

Many a long month's thought and calculation this gave him, and many a long journey also, to and fro in the train, for Dundee itself was to have the honour of building and fitting out the *Sea Elephant*.

Captain Mayne Brace had no children of his own.

He used to say that he never could see any fun in a sailor marrying, who was here to-day and away to-morrow, bound for the back of Bellfuff—wherever that may be—with only a plank or two betwixt him and eternity, and liable any day or hour to have to make a sudden call at the door of Davy Jones' Locker.

Ingomar quite agreed with him as to the inadvisability of leaving widows behind them to mourn their loss for the rest of their lives.

"Mourn for the rest of their lives? Eh? Humph!" That was Captain Brace's reply. And proof enough, too, I think, that he was not likely to run the risk of wrecking his barque of life on the reefs and rocks of matrimony.

But Brace had been a saving man though no niggard, and therefore he did not begrudge taking Walt and Charlie with him, to see the beauties of bonnie Dundee whenever school terms permitted.

The companionship of such a man as Captain Brace was indeed a liberal education in itself for them. For even during their holidays he would never suffer them to be altogether idle, and he was, when time admitted, their tutor in everything pertaining to the working of a ship.

The Dundee shipbuilders were honest. They considered that their reputation was quite hung on gimbals with regard to the laying down and building



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“CHARLIE AND WALT ENJOYED THE BARE-BACK RIDES”

of the *Sea Elephant*, especially under the supervision of such an officer as Captain Brace, who would not permit a plank, beam, or knee to be used that was not as sound as bronze.

The manning and officering of the *Sea Elephant* was another matter for much thought.

She would be when finished about 700 tons, and would carry provisions for three whole years. Every pound or parcel of these would be from the best firms, and hermetically sealed with such care that there would be no danger of anything going wrong should it have to be kept for many years.

I cannot spare space to describe in detail all the articles of food and drink which the two vessels would carry between them, nor their armour. As to the latter, independently of ordinary rifles and ammunition, they had specially built tanks for explosives of tremendous power; and these, I may inform you, were so packed for safety that even if the ship was in flames above them, there could be no danger of catastrophe.

The uses these would be put to we shall see anon, but there was a skilled artificer in charge of them, a man of the name of Macdonald, who had worked in dynamite factories since his boyhood—a steady, sober, long-headed Scot, whose rating was to be Captain of Explosives (Captain X. he was called for short).

The *Sea Elephant* was going to war, it is true, but it was war with Nature's forces, for the age has at last come in which Man is master here below.

Ingomar was in constant and loving correspondence with his mother and sister. He wrote to his father, too, but told him nothing about his intention of disappearing from the civilized world for a time. All he said was, that he was embarking upon an honest though daring enterprise, which, he trusted, would, if he were successful, restore him once more to his father's favour. If he succeeded, then, he would return, the prodigal son to his father's house; if he failed, that father would never hear of him any more.

The captain of the *Sea Elephant* was an officer of high repute in the United States Navy, who had seen service in the Polar regions. His name, Bell.

Mr. Curtis was second in command, and belonged to the British Royal Navy. He was a young fellow of barely six and twenty, and with all the dash and go your true-born Englishman and sailor always possesses. From the first he and Ingomar were the greatest friends.

The crew were all tried men, Arctic or icemen, as they are called—English, Scots, Finns, and Norwegians.

"Be good to mother," was Ingomar's very last postscript to Sissie. "Don't believe me dead

whatever you hear till thrice twelve months are past and gone."

Poor Ingomar, he was nothing if not romantic!

They sailed, those two ships, both upon the same day from a port in the English Channel, but with so little fuss, and so little newspaper reporting, that hardly anybody save the nearest and dearest relatives of officers and crew witnessed their departure.

It was not until they were out and away leagues and leagues from the chalky cliffs of England, not indeed until the August sun had set, that Ingomar, as he stood on the quarter-deck of the sturdy *Walrus*, heaved a sigh of relief, and turned to shake hands with bold Mayne Brace.

"Thank God, captain," he said, "the trouble, the worry, the fuss, is over at last. How soundly I shall sleep to-night!"

The skipper laughed as he rubbed his hands in glee.

"And now," he said, "'tis do or die."

CHAPTER II

A GIANT OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS

In the good old barque the *Walrus* went not only Captain Mayne Brace himself with our American hero Ingomar, and our two British boys, but the spectioneer, with Dumpty, and a picked crew of sealers or whalers, who hailed from Dundee or Hull. Then there were the Yak-Yaks, or wild Innuits, under the immediate command of Slapdash himself, who also commanded the bears, Gruff, Growley, Grumpey, and Meg. The sub-chief of the Yak-Yaks had charge of the dogs—the Eskimo dogs, I mean, for there was one other dog to be mentioned presently, who would have scorned to be classed as an Eskimo, just as an Englishman would resent being looked upon as a cannibal from the Congo.

Milton the mate was the only man missing from the *Walrus*. He had been appointed to the *Sea Elephant* as second lieutenant, and was very proud indeed of the honour, for this splendid barque was to all intents and purposes the flag-ship. Her

commander—Captain Bell, of the United States Navy — had seen much service in the Arctic, while Curtis, first lieutenant, was a daring and very clever young fellow, specially lent from the British Royal Navy for the expedition. He was, as a sailor, your *beau-ideal* of a Navy man, and Navy men, you know, are warranted to go anywhere and do anything. Although Curtis was a most exemplary officer, a botanist and hydrographer, with a *penchant* for meteorology, he was the reverse of proud. One doesn't look for, nor expect, pride in a true gentleman, and although Arnold Curtis came of a very ancient English family, and had blue blood in his veins, and though he had reached the very advanced age of twenty and five, he was out-and-out a boy at heart, and had never been much more happy than when in the cricket-field or making one in a game of footer. At such times, hydrography and meteorology and all the rest of the sciences, except that which was needed for the game, were banished, and he was a boy all over, from his fair hair and laughing blue eyes right away down to his shoes or boots.

Months and months before the two ships sailed, Ingomar and he had been inseparable, while Charlie and Walt often dined with him on board the *Sea Elephant*.

Well, I was going to say that Captain Bell, or the "Admiral," as he was more often called, was, like most of his crew, a thorough iceman. The crew were chiefly Americans, and every man Jack of them had braved dangers innumerable on the sea of ice before this.

On the flag-ship were three well-known men of science—a Scot, a German, and an Englishman, but they were just as jolly as anybody. I will not permit my reader to associate long faces, solemnity, and humdrumness with scientists.

Let me add that the British and American flags in this enterprise, instead of being tacked and tagged together as at first proposed, were hoisted, when any occasion demanded their hoisting, one at the peak and another at the fore, or main, as the case might be.

Almost every hour during the voyage to Gibraltar the two barques kept as close together as possible. But here, after a farewell dinner, they parted, the flag-ship bearing up for the Suez Canal, to cruise and make scientific but brief observations all the way down through the Indian Ocean, until she should meet once again with the *Walrus* at the lonesome and wildly rugged island of Kerguelen, which lies further than 50° South, and in 70° East longitude, or, roughly speaking, about midway 'twixt the Cape of Good Hope and New Zealand.

Both ships carried as much coal as possible, but each had a noble spread of canvas, and so steam was never up while the wind blew fair. The Trades carried the *Walrus* well and fairly towards the equator, and when these began to fail them, the order was given to get up steam. So no time was lost, the chief object being to get into far Southern seas as soon as possible, and to commence therein the true work of the expedition.

Ingomar had one great, one only ambition. It was to make a noble record that should eclipse that of every nation which had attempted before this, the circumnavigation of the Southern Pole.

The finding of the real pole, as people phrase it, was something which might certainly be dreamt of but never probably accomplished. Yet manly ambition is a noble thing. Let us aim high. If we fire an arrow at the moon, we shall not hit it, but we shall hit a mark far higher than if we had fired at a bush of furze or broom.

I'm afraid that neither Charlie nor Walter cared a very great deal for science for science's own sake, but they would certainly relish the adventures connected therewith, and all the strange scenes and creatures they were bound to see.

As for young Armstrong, or Ingomar as he still preferred to be called, he chose to consider himself of very little account indeed.

"I am neither a sailor nor a naturalist, nor anything else," he said one day rather mournfully down in the saloon. "I love Nature, I appreciate beauty, but I'd rather be able to reef topsails or take my trick at the wheel."

"But, my dear young sir," said the captain, smiling, "you have found the sinews of war."

"Found the cash? I have," he laughed somewhat sarcastically. "Yes, and you may well say I *found* it. Paddy O'Flynn found a pair of tongs—at the fireside—and got into trouble about it. And I—well, I hadn't even the honour and glory of making the money we're spending. I can sing a song, spin a yarn, or recite a piece, and there my utility ends. Why, Humpty Dumpty is a deuced sight more of a real man than I am."

Charlie and Walt laughed aloud. The idea of comparing himself with Humpty Dumpty seemed very ridiculous!

Long, long ago, crossing the line in a sailing ship used to be a very dreary affair indeed. The doldrums were always a drawback. Is there any real British boy, I wonder, who does not know what is meant by the "doldrums"? If so I trust he will get into them some of these days, in a brig or schooner. It will be an experience he is not likely to forget. His barque may be any time, from two or three weeks to a month, in crossing the line, for

the wind may be *nil*. It may come in puffs or cat's-paws from any direction of the compass, or, if you ask a sailor how it is, he may tell you discontentedly, that it is straight up and down like a cow's tail.

Meanwhile the sea is as calm as Farmer Hodge's mill-dam, a sea of oil, or glycerine, or mercury, but it is a sea of great, round, rolling waves all the same. The ship's motion, therefore, is just about as disagreeable as could well be imagined; there is no "forwardness" about it. Now you go up, up, up, now you go down, down, down. Sea-legs are little good, and in your progress along the deck, if you do not succeed in getting hold of something, then just as often as not you shall find yourself on your back in the scuppers. You could not say "lee-scuppers," you know, because there is no lee about it, and no windward either. You laugh when the other fellow falls, and perhaps the smile has hardly vanished when down you go yourself. Discomfort is no name for the doldrums. Fiddles are on the table at every meal, of course, but these do not prevent minor accidents, such as finding the fowl you were about to carve squatting on your lap, the potatoes chasing each other all over the floor, your plate of delicious pea-soup upside down on your knees, or your best white breeches soaked with black coffee.

Of course there are strange birds to be seen, and flying fish, and porpoises, and sharks, and, on rare

occasions, the sea-serpent himself, but this doesn't comfort you, with the thermometer over 95° and the pitch boiling in the seams.

On this voyage there was a pretty commotion, when, one evening, Neptune himself, King of the Ocean, with his bodyguard, his lady wife, and his barber, came on board. It was a pretty bit of acting altogether. Ingomar had consented to play Neptune in order to be let off, for he had never crossed the line before, and a splendid Neptune he made, while squat, droll little Humpty Dumpty was the wife. Ten in all had to submit to the terrible ordeal of shaving—an iron hoop was the razor, a tar-brush spread the horrid lather—and the grizzly embrace of Neptune's bearded wife, to say nothing of the bath to close up with. Neither Charlie nor Walter, who were the first victims, seemed to like it; but when all was over, and they hurried into their dry pyjama suits, they enjoyed the fun as much as anybody else. The whole wild scene was lit up with electric gleams, blue and red and green, with music galore.

The drollest part of the business was this. Gruff the bear, wondering what all the row was about, managed to scramble up from his ice-tank in which he now lived below, and, accompanied by his wife, put in an appearance just as the fun was waxing fast and furious. The fun grew faster and still more

furious after this, especially when Gruff capsized Neptune's throne, and tried to hug Neptune's wife.

While attempting to escape, Humpty Dumpty went heels over head into the great sail-berth, and Gruff and his wife jumped in next with a coughing roar that shook the ship from bowsprit to binnacle.

This ended the shaving-match, but Slap-dash managed to lead his pets away at last, and then the dancing commenced. The music was faultless and beautiful, but the dancing was—droll, to say the least. Then after the main-brace had been spliced, the affair resolved itself into a concert, and finally a yarn-spinning contest.

But everybody was happy, and that was the best of it.

* * * * *

Long before the ship had rounded the Cape, and stretched east and south away for Kerguelen, bears and Eskimo dogs were quite acclimatized, and most excellent sailors.

The sea had tamed the bears till they were as harmless as kittens, and just about as playful, though in a larger, more lumpy way.

They had become very friendly, too, with all the dogs, and all the Yak-Yaks, and even with the crew.

The Shetland ponies, however, were never permitted to come out of their comfortable quarters when Gruff, and Growley, and Grumpey, and Meg

were at their gambols, shuffling round and round the deck with the dogs at their heels, positively playing at leap-frog with their monster yellow companions.

The king of the whole menagerie was Wallace—a most beautiful and intelligent long-haired sable-and-white Scotch collie. He, however, when the fun was going on, always took his perch on the top of the capstan, from which he barked his orders, and seemed to conduct the gambols and fun. Yet sometimes he got so excited and playful that he must jump off his perch and mingle for awhile himself with the strange revellers.

It was a long voyage to Kerguelen, but on the whole a very happy one, and so accustomed by this time were our heroes to stormy winds and raging seas, that the wildest gales did not terrify them, for every one on board, from the captain downwards, had the greatest confidence in the sea-going qualities of the good old *Walrus*.

It was a long voyage to Kerguelen, but they weren't there just yet; and long before its rugged rocks and hills hove in sight, they experienced a spell of such fearful weather as one seldom meets even in southern seas.

It was dark and wild and fearsome!

Dark, owing to the immensity of the cloud strata above and around, which brought the horizon almost

close aboard—a mingled chaos of driving mist and moving water ; wild with the terrible force of the wind, which was fully five and ninety miles an hour, and fearsome from the height of the foam-crested waves, and the black abysses into which the *Walrus* ever and anon plunged, remaining almost motionless for long seconds, while the seas made a clean breach over her.

Captain Mayne Brace himself confessed he had never seen the barometer sink lower.

Every stitch of sail that could be spared was at first taken in, and the ship was battened down ; for when the first squall struck her, the *Walrus* had been in a beam wind, with no fires lit. Orders were now issued to get up steam with all speed, for the gale was from the E.N.E., and although the *Walrus* lay to, she was being driven rapidly out of her course.

Things reached a crisis when the chief engineer—a sturdy, business-looking Scot—made his way aft as best he could, and reported to the captain that something had gone wrong with the engines.

“We have broken down?” asked Mayne Brace, anxiously.

“I wouldn’t go so far as that, sir,” replied Mr. Watson, cautiously. “Something’s out of gear, and it will be quite impossible to put matters straight till the storm abates and we find ourselves on a level keel.”

"All right, Mr. Watson. You'll do your best, I know, and so will we."

And Watson scrambled forward once more, smiling and happy.

The storm, a few hours after this, was at its very height.

Well for all hands was it that the *Walrus* was sturdily built, tough, and strong, a ship that had weathered many and many a tempest in the frozen North, and could hold her own amidst the wildest waves of the great Antarctic Ocean.

It had been early in the day when the storm came on, but long hours flew by without the slightest signs of its abating.

The noise both above and below in the saloon where Ingomar and the boys were trying to take it easy beside the stove, was fearful. On the deck snow and hail added to the confusion, and when suddenly the vessel entered a stream of small pieces of drifting ice, the heavy rattling bombardment of the ship's sides rendered all conversation quite impossible.

A dark and starless night followed, but the first strength of the storm was somewhat abated, and when day broke lazily in the east, glimmering red through the froth of the seas, it had settled into a steady gale, which lasted for days and days, and prevented the barque from keeping her course.

In these strange Southern seas sudden changes in

the state of the weather are the rule rather than the exception ; and so one morning, after quickly veering round to the south'ard, the wind fell almost to calm, and with stu'n sails 'low and aloft, the good ship now bore up for Kerguelen, from which lone isle of the ocean she could not now be very far distant.

The sun shone brightly once again, and every one on board felt happy and hopeful.

To add to their joy, the engineer had managed to repair the machinery, which he vowed was now stronger than ever, so in a few more hours sail was taken in, and every heart was beating time to the pleasant old rick-racket of whirling wheels and revolving screw.

"Land ahead, sir!"

This from the man who was swinging high aloft in the crow's-nest.

The mate went into the foretop to have a look at it through his glass.

One glance was enough.

"This is no land," he told the skipper, "but a huge iceberg, that must have floated very far indeed out of its course."

Then all hands crowded the deck to feast their eyes on the strange sight.

Not a soul on board this ship that had not beheld ice in every shape seen in high Northern altitudes, but none so remarkable in formation as this giant of the Southern seas.

CHAPTER III

FIRST ADVENTURES ON THE ICE

When men have been at sea for months and months, catching hardly e'er a blink of the shore, and seeing day by day only the faces and forms of their ship-mates, or exchanging passing signals with some other ocean wanderer like the vessel on which they stand, any unusual sight serves to excite them and render them happy for the time being.

But this great iceberg was far indeed from a usual sight. How it had become detached from the vast sea-wall far farther south and floated northwards, almost into the latitude of Kerguelen itself, was, of course, a matter of mere conjecture. The currents of the oceans and the winds had doubtless drifted it hither and thither, for months, if not years ; seas had beaten against its sheer and lofty sides, and hollowed strange arches therein ; but the everlasting snows that covered it, and rose into cones and peaks high above, were probably as white now as, or even whiter than, when it first broke loose and became a rover on the ocean's breast. And the very currents that had



wafted it thither might in time carry it south again, to join its fellows, and tell the strange story of its wanderings and all the marvels it had seen.

The description of an iceberg of this size, or of any size, in fact, is one of the most difficult and unsatisfactory tasks that an author can attempt.

This one—this vast “gomeril” of ice and snow—might well have been taken for an island at first sight. For it was fully a mile in length, presenting to the astonished eyes of the *Walrus's* people a long, glittering wall of blue and violet fully two hundred feet in height. The white hummocks towered far back and above the cold cliff edge. At one side it shelved slowly down towards the sea-level in a long cape, or tongue, and upon this, if anywhere, it would be possible to land.

When the *Walrus* had ventured so near that the hills above disappeared, and only the gleaming sides were visible, glittering in the spring sunshine, an order was given to stop ship, and not one whaler only, but two, were called away to “board” the mysterious iceberg, as the spectioneer phrased it.

The sea was very calm and blue, and only a long-waved swell was visible on its clear surface, a swell which, when it rushed into the caves and broke into foam in the darkness, elicited ever and anon a long-drawn moan or roar—a deep diapason, in fact, a musical blending of every note of an octave, from

this mighty organ on which Father Neptune himself was playing and to which he sang.

This marvellous sea-song, however, melted away almost into silence as the boats reached the outlying tongue of ice on which they were to be drawn up.

It must not be supposed that the scene presented to our heroes, as they were being rowed towards the island-iceberg, was one of desolation.

The sun above them was shining to-day with unusual splendour and glittering on the ocean, which was a beautiful study in brightest blue and silver. High in the air circled and screamed flocks of beautiful sea-gulls, among which were cormorants and skuas, and many a bird resembling those to be met with in the far-off regions around the Northern pole.

Away to the eastward a whale had revealed his black back and head, and the steam from his blow-holes rose like fountains into the sky. Farther off was another, and many strange seals raised their shoulders high above the water, to gaze with liquid eyes resplendent, and wonder who or what they might be that were thus invading their lonely and silent domains.

Some of these very seals—chiefly sea-leopards they were—had landed on the ice-foot to slumber in the sunshine.

As the first boat, which contained Ingomar and

our boys, swept round towards the landing-place, they noticed to their astonishment that the whole brae-side of the monster berg was covered with what at first sight appeared to be a crowd of daintily dressed schoolboys in long black coats, orange neck-ties, black caps, and waistcoats of dazzling white. These were all in motion, and were bobbing and bowing to each other or shaking hands as they moved about for all the world like people in a garden-party.

Only these were not people, but king penguins. They are just about the drollest birds, taking them all round, that there are on the surface of the earth or on the face of the waters thereof.

Penguins are of several species, the largest and rarest being what are called emperor penguins, and stand about four feet high. I say *stand*, because they are so built that walking on one end or resting statue-like on their tails suits them best. The flippers of these are about fifteen inches long, and, when not in use, hang down by their sides in a very awkward-like manner. Their beaks are of great strength and length, and they know how to use them if you interfere too much with them.

I have never known an emperor penguin or a king penguin—next in size to his imperial majesty—have the slightest respect for human beings. They never think of running away if you go amongst them.

They cannot fly, because they have no real wings. But they can waddle, and they can paddle either on the snow or in the water.

When the ground on which these strange birds are travelling all in a row is somewhat rough, they cannot do more than about a mile an hour ; even this seems very serious work for them. But when they get among soft or smooth snow, down they flop on their breasts, out go the flippers, and they toboggan along over the surface with great speed.

In the water, above or below it, they dart along at the rate of knots. I believe that if the sharks want a nice bit of penguin to eke out a dinner of small fish, they have to swim exceedingly fast to find it.

Sharks, however, are not quite so common in these far Southern seas as they are about the Polar regions of the North. Food is scarcer, and this fact easily accounts for their absence.

* * * *

When the boats had been called away to proceed to the examination of that great berg, it was not only the officers and crew who felt unwonted exhilaration, but every animal on board as well. The Eskimo dogs happened to be up having their run at the time, as usual under the supervision of the honest collie Wallace ; while Nick and Nora stood proudly aloof on the quarter-deck.

"You and I, Nora," said Nick, seeming to talk to his wife with eyes and tail, "shan't mingle with that noisy gang. I pity Wallace, who has charge of such savages."

"Aren't they calling away a boat?" said Nora in the same language.

"They've just called away two," replied Nick; "and we've got to stand by to get on board as quickly as anybody. I mean to stretch my little legs on the snow, anyhow."

The sledge-dogs were barking with joy, and vaulting and leaping over each other, a perfect whirlwind of happiness.

They were convinced in their own minds that they were back again in Greenland, and would soon be landed to live happy ever after. Even the Shetland ponies stretched long necks towards the iceberg. They snuffed something unusual, anyhow, and felt that something was going to happen.

But the behaviour of the bears was strangest of all. I believe that long before the berg was sighted, these yellow-white monsters were aware of its presence on the horizon.

They became unusually restive, walking rapidly up and down their cage, and tossing their heads in the air.

There was none too much room in their quarters, so, of course, they got in each other's way. Gruff

was a good-hearted bear, and kind even to his dog companions, but he knew he was king of that cage, and conducted himself according. If their language of eyes and gestures could be translated into English, it would be as follows :—

“I’m certain,” Gruff said to Growley—“I’m certain, my dear, we are near home at last, and won’t I be glad, just! I’m longing for a bit of fresh seal-steak.”

“And so am I,” said Growley.

“And so am I,” said Grumpey, yawning.

Gruff slued smartly round, and landed Grumpey a blow that sent him sprawling on the deck.

“Who asked your opinion, eh? Can’t you learn better manners than interfere when your king and queen are talking?”

“Which I didn’t mean no harm,” whimpered Grumpey.

“Hold your tongue, sir! You’re not to answer; you’re not to wink even, when I speak. Take that, and that, and that.”

And Gruff whacked Grumpey all round the cage, and made him sit quietly in a corner with his consort Meg.

“As I was saying,” said the king, “when that impudent rascal interrupted me, we must be near home, and I’m going on shore to see how matters stand, as soon’s I get half a chance.”

"Oh, you're never going to leave *me!*" cried Growley.

"My dear wife, never! How could such a thing enter your head? I'll come back when—when—when I've had a look round."

Gruff was as good as his word, and hardly had the boats been hauled up on the sea-foot of the iceberg than, in the stillness of the morning, the sound of a mighty plash was heard, followed by shouting and hallooing. Gruff had escaped, and was sturdily ploughing his way shorewards.

Gruff could have swum twenty miles through the sea, and been just as calm and self-possessed as he was when he hauled himself, hand over hand, up out of the water.

He shook himself, and gallons of spray flew in all directions. He shook himself again and again, and then he was ready for a romp.

He gave vent to a coughing roar that made the welkin ring—a roar that was echoed back from the ice-peaks above, and caused the very boats to shake.

It was a joy-shout, however, and then his antics commenced. They were somewhat ungainly, it is true, for he tumbled on his back, he stood on end, first on his hind legs, then on his head, then he went shuffling off in search of a seal with the two Newfoundlands, who could move much quicker than he, racing round and round him, and barking for joy.

No seal was to be found, but Gruff smote, first one king penguin, then another. They lay dead on the snow, the air full of their beautiful feathers. These birds were nice eating, and Gruff made a hearty meal off them, and licked his great chops with satisfaction.

He seemed very happy and contented after this, and lay down in the sun to sleep, while our heroes went prospecting round and over this wondrous island of ice.

When the boys sat down at last on the lee-side of the iceberg to rest and enjoy a sun-bath, what impressed them most, I think, was the intensity of the silence.

There was not a sound to be heard save the lapping of the waves against the ice-cliffs, and the strange cries of the penguins, which, although the birds were fully half a mile off, could be most distinctly heard. No one talked save in subdued tones. To have rudely broken the holy silence would have seemed something akin to sacrilege.

Beyond the jagged snow-ridge was the dark rippling sea—wondrously blue to-day—while high above the sky itself looked like another ocean, the clouds like bergs of snow-clad ice.

“On such a day as this,” said Ingomar, “what a pleasure it is even to live and have one’s being!”

“Isn’t it just like being in another world?” cried Charlie, enthusiastically.

"Ay, lad, ay, and you are already coming under the glamour of the ice-spirit. The influence is felt in the seas around the North Pole, where you've been so long; but old sailors have told me that it is far more perceptible down here."

"The very dogs appear to feel it. Look, both Nick and Nora are sound asleep!"

"No one," he added, "can understand the glamour that steals over one in these regions. It is usually ascribed to a species of magnetism which affects the mind, the very soul itself, with a gentle, contented languor, which is nothing if it be not happiness. For sailors, who have once experienced it, will return again and again to the seas of ice, and brave dangers cheerfully that the bravest mariners of other oceans would hesitate to face."

"Is it the silence, I wonder," said Walt, "that makes one drowsy? I could sleep now."

"It is the silence, Walt, but not that alone. For we are breathing the purest air in all the wide, wide world. Besides, though we cannot perceive it, the whole of this great island of ice is for ever gently rising and falling on the Antarctic swell."

"But now, boys, what about returning?"

"Sit yet a little longer," pleaded Charlie. "I like to fancy that we are Crusoes, just we three, or that there is nobody in the world but ourselves and the dogs."

"Are we going to shoot some specimens of gulls and penguins?" said Walt. "We have our guns. Isn't it a pity not to use them?"

"No; rather would it be a pity if we did. It is nearly the end of October now, Walt. It is springtime, or almost, in these regions. Why, then, should we disturb the happiness of the feathered race? It seems to me that a curse would follow us in all our cruising if we stained the pure white surface of our first iceberg with the blood of even one of God's beautiful birds."

"I fear Gruff has no such romantic scruples," said Charlie. "For here he comes shuffling down towards us; and with his great chest bedabbled with gore, he does look a very disreputable person indeed."

Gruff certainly did, and he was rather flustered too, for presently round a neighbouring hummock came Slap-dash himself and a couple of Yak-Yaks.

Gruff was wanted, and didn't like the idea of going on board just yet.

But more than this, for when the beautiful bear made up his mind not to do a thing, it took a good deal of coaxing to cause him to alter his determination.

Though no one on the ice knew it, the ship had been brought as near to the ice as possible with safety, for under the water a berg is usually four times as large as the portion exposed.

Slap-dash tried all the persuasion possible, but Gruff, although headed off by the Newfoundlands, refused to be wheedled.

Even the dogs did not dare to go too near.

"I advise you to keep at a respectable distance," Gruff seemed to say. "One touch of my little foot would bury you both in the snow, and you'd never bark again in this world."

"I'm not going off for hours yet," he told Slap-dash; and away he scampered to discuss another penguin.

To have attempted force might have led to an accident, and so at long last all hands returned to the boat, and rowed away towards the ship, dogs and all.

Gruff was close to the sea now, and staring after them.

"Oh," he said to himself, "if that's your little game, here is for after you. I can't forget my poor dear wife Growley."

He leapt into the sea.

Now, when a snow-bear takes to the water, he swims with terrible strength and speed.

To their consternation, they could soon perceive that Gruff was gaining on them, and would undoubtedly attempt to scramble on board, and so capsize the boat.

"Give way, men!" shouted Ingomar. "Pull for dear life!"

A whaler is not a racing-boat, but the sailors made her fly through the water for all that, and all in time they gained the ship's side and got on board.

Next moment Gruff was alongside also, and on board too. He was so glad to see his wife again that he promptly knocked her into the lee-scuppers.

Then the two had a stand-up fight or a terrible wrestling match.

But bears are like the Lowland Scots, and biting and scratching is their method of making love.

* * * * *

Having made all the observations needed, the good ship once more pursued her way eastwards and by north towards her destination.

CHAPTER IV

IN FEATHER-LAND—A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT

"How are you, old man?"

"By George, Jack, I *am* glad to see you!"

"How well you're looking, Tom!"

"Why, Jim, is that really your silly old self?"

"Me, and nobody else, lad. How've ye been?"

"Been roughing it a trifle. Got driven out of our track a piece, you know. Something smashed and we couldn't make up our leeway."

"So glad to see you!"

"Been long here?"

"Three whole blessed weeks. The *Elephant* behaved splendidly all through, except in a typhoon. A real Indian Oceanier that were, Jack. But we called at Mauritius and got letters."

"Letters?"

"Ay, lad—letters from home. The last we'll have for many a long month and year."

These scraps of conversation are but specimens of those heard on board the good *Sea Elephant*, fore and aft, when the *Walrus* people boarded her

at Kerguelen, after dropping anchor in a natural rock-girt harbour of that Isle of Desolation.

Captain Mayne Brace was himself in charge of the whaler which had brought them here, with Ingomar and Charlie ; and now they were below in the sister-ship's cosy saloon, and for a whole hour the conversation never lagged nor flagged.

Everybody was just as jolly as jolly could be, and Dr. Wright had scarcely a case on the sick-list worth talking about.

True that in hoisting the crow's-nest a rope which had been dried at the galley-fire, and was somewhat scorched in one place, had snapped. The crow's-nest was hurled to the deck again, but only one man had been injured.

There was no work done to-day. The mariners visited each other, and gave themselves up to enjoyment. When the music from a merry little string band was not sounding from the 'tween decks of the *Sea Elephant*, you could hear it distinctly enough swelling over the water from another merry little string band on board of the *Walrus*, and hear the shouting, and even the laughter, of the crew as well.

Now and then came the coughing roar of the great bears or the shrill but joyful barking of the dogs. Gruff couldn't understand why he and his wife were not permitted to join the dancers on deck.

But this might have been somewhat awkward for the sailors of the *Elephant* who were visiting the *Walrus*, for though King Gruff knew every one of his own crew, from the captain down to the ship's cat, he might have treated strangers a trifle roughly. Those who have had the pleasure or pain of waltzing with a Polar bear on the Arctic ice, have been heard to admit afterwards that it is possible to find a much more gentle partner.

This first evening or night—for the days were now long and bright—was one that the crews of those barques would remember long after this under far more dreary circumstances.

But the letters? Ah, yes; a swift mail steamer had brought those to the capital of Mauritius Isle, and now they were handed over to the officers and crew of the *Walrus*. They nearly all brought joy and comfort.

Charlie's and Walt's were especially nice, and the same may be said of Ingomar's letter from his father and sister.

The young fellow had written weeks before he had left England, and here were the answers. The sister's letter was sweet, as sisters' letters seem always to be; and the father's—well, his son could read between the lines, and he felt certain that there had been tears in the good but proud old man's eyes as he penned the following lines: "You are a brave boy,

Hans. You are a true Armstrong, and it is just possible I may have been a trifle harsh to you. I would rather, however, you had not gone away, especially to the wild and treacherous seas around the Antarctic Pole. Come back to me, boy—I say come back to me, because I feel certain you will with honour. Come back to your sister and mother.”

“I’ll return with honour, dad,” said Ingomar to himself, as he folded the letter and placed it in his pocket. “I’ll come back to you with honour, or never return again. It is a handsome letter, and, father, you have a heart that I was cruel enough to vex and chafe. I’ll never part with this letter, for, ah! dad, it shows, however you try to hide it, that you have already forgiven your prodigal son.”

He looked very handsome as he stood there in his little cabin, to which he had stolen away to read the letters from home *over again*.

There was the rattle of oars in rowlocks, and he knew a boat from the *Elephant* was coming swinging alongside.

Then footsteps overhead, and presently entered his friend Lieutenant Curtis.

“Hillo, Armstrong!”

“Hillo, Curtis!”

They shook hands.

“There is going to be a council of war—war with

the ice—to-morrow forenoon, and you and I have to be there. But meanwhile I want you to come for a cruise on shore to have a look at the birds."

"I'm with you ; and I suppose there will be room for the boys?"

"Lots. They can take an oar each. They are strong enough."

The extreme dreariness and loneliness of these rugged, dark, and hilly shores during some months of the year can be better imagined than described.

Kerguelen was the first to discover the isle. He was a French admiral, but evidently he did not like the looks of it, and his examination must have been but cursory, for he made but one or two half-hearted attempts to examine the place, putting it down in his log as a portion of the great Antarctic continent, about which we have all heard so much.

But other brave mariners managed to put the world to rights, and so Kerguelen was found to be an island.

The rivalry that exists between all nations in the exploration of the great snow lands and seas of ice has done much good. We have most of us had a share in it, and so whether the first man to find either Pole be British or American, or even a Dane or Frenchman, no one else will begrudge him the honour.

No wonder that Kerguelen and Cook himself were

glad to get clear away from this island, for the gales that rage around it are often terrific in the Southern autumn. The very appearance of the sky, too, is forbidding, with its awful rolling cumulus or its hues of leaden grey or inky black.

But it was November when the men of the *Walrus* rowed our heroes on shore, and the day happened to be calm and fine—hardly a breath of wind, hardly a cloudlet in all the firmament.

Now and then a seal's great head would be raised above the smooth surface of the ocean, and round, wondering eyes would gaze thoughtfully on the wanderers, then slowly sink once more.

And there were gulls afloat on the water and gulls in the sky.

Cormorants could be seen, skuas, and now and then the lovely snow-white petrel.

Some of these had their nests on rocky cliffs, others on the more level shore, but the skuas preferred higher ground, and the droll and weird-looking king penguins had flocked to higher regions still, and formed crowded cities that they might build and converse in peace.

Young Curtis was a student of Nature, and had many other scientific attainments, which made him an excellent companion. There was no finding one's self weary where Arnold was. The rocks, the birds, the fossils, the seaweeds, and medusæ, the

fish, and the flora, all too rare or scarce, formed the subject of most fascinating conversation.

And this young and brave officer had already explored much of Kerguelen, and taken many observations which were bound to be useful in many branches of science. So to-day he was capable of acting as guide to the little picnic.

It was more than springtime in these latitudes. It wanted but little over a month till midsummer, so the birds were very busy indeed. The penguins were an especial study, and their droll ways amused the boys greatly.

"Arrant thieves, they are," said Curtis. "They are at present too busy examining us. But if one sees a chance, he does not hesitate a moment to steal his neighbour's eggs, and stick to them too."

"It is a good thing," said Ingomar, "we did not bring the dogs with us."

"Yes, indeed, Hans. They would have caused much destruction and havoc."

The men followed the officers, and brought bags of matting, in which to stow a few hundred eggs.

Birds'-nesting is sinful, but eggs are needed for food, and those of gulls and penguins are very nice eating indeed. The flesh of the birds may have a fishy taste, if the creatures have not been skinned, but the eggs have no bad taste whatever.

The females sat quietly on their nests, as fearless as frogs, and satisfied themselves with dabbling or pecking at the trousers or boots of the intruders. The cock penguins also take turn about with the hens to sit on the eggs, but at present they were not on watch. They lined the streets of this strange feather-land, and were always ready to fight if any one went too near them.

"Why are there so many birds down yonder on the water or flying about the rocks?" Walt asked.

"Oh," replied Curtis, "that is a secret not known to all naturalists. Many of these birds are fishing for the rookery, or rather, for their own particular nest in it; but there are very many who choose not to enter into the holy bonds of matrimony at all, and great rogues and cheats these bachelors are, and seem to do their best, or rather worst, to annoy the more sober and staid married folks.

"And this is true," he added, "of nearly all birds that congregate in colonies, and even of our own humble household British sparrow."

After a most delightful luncheon, in which the eggs of the sea-birds figured largely, it was proposed by Curtis that they should re-embark, and, rowing round past a cape, visit a still undiscovered part of the island.

They had some difficulty in finding a landing-place, but managed to do so at last, and leaving

two men with the boat, the others started off into the interior in search of adventures.

No wild beasts here, no savages, for the place is uninhabited. The hearts of our heroes were young, however ; and although they journeyed quite six miles into the interior, through rugged ravines and ice-cold streams, without, of course, the vestige of a road, all were as happy as the day was going to be long.

They found many rare specimens of flora, some eggs, and a few fossils of long-extinct shells.

They were returning by what was considered a near cut, though the ground was higher and far rougher, when suddenly, on the brink of a ravine, the ground gave way under the feet of poor Curtis, and he suddenly disappeared into a kind of crevasse.

They could hear him shouting for a very short time, but his cries seemed to wax feebler and feebler, and then were heard no more.

What was to be done ? To descend was impossible without a rope, and here there was none.

But Ingomar, as soon as he recovered somewhat from the grief and shock—for it was firmly believed that Curtis must be dead—despatched men back to the boat, to row in all haste to the ship and procure assistance.

This was, indeed, a sad calamity with which to wind up a very happy day.

While the men were gone, Ingomar and the boys did their very best to find some entrance on lower ground into the crevasse, but were altogether unsuccessful.

There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to wait.

Perhaps time had never seemed more long to any one than it now did to our heroes.

The sun went down at last in orange and crimson, his beams lighting up the waves with unusual splendour, but no one to-night could appreciate the scenery under such circumstances.

The men returned at length, and brought with them not only ropes, but even lanterns ; for although there would be a long summer twilight, night would soon fall, and doubtless it would be dark enough at the bottom of the terrible chasm.

It was Ingomar himself who volunteered to be lowered down, and he would brook no contradiction. Was not Arnold Curtis his friend—a friend to whom somehow he had become peculiarly attached ?

So the lantern was lighted, Ingomar placed his limbs in the bight of the rope, and immediately gave the order to lower away gently.

In a few seconds' time he had sunk to the bottom of the abyss.

CHAPTER V

INGOMAR HIMSELF HAD A DREAM TO DREAM

Long minutes went by, and still no signal came from below to haul up.

One of the sailors—a light-weight, but strong—had just proposed shinning down the rope, when suddenly it was shaken three successive times, and the men commenced hauling up with every care.

Charlie and Walt had nothing to do, and their suspense was therefore dreadful.

The rope seemed so thin. What if it should suddenly snap from chafing over the sharp edge of the rock!

At last, however, brave Ingomar's handsome, resolute face was seen over the precipice. And in his arms he bore a sad burden.

Curtis was not tall, so his weight was nothing in comparison with the strength of his rescuer. But his face hung backwards, and was covered with blood.

The doctor, who had come back with the men, now made attempts to resuscitate his unfortunate patient. But for a long time he was unsuccessful. At last

Arnold opened his eyes, and was presently able to swallow a little cordial, and even to talk a word or two, though very incoherently.

"There is no fracture," said Dr. Wright, as the unfortunate lieutenant relapsed once more into insensibility. "Bear him to the boat most carefully, men, and we will follow."

"No fracture, doctor. I'm so glad."

Then Ingomar fainted. The strain had been too much for even his strong physique.

He was laid on his back, however, and soon revived. When fairly restored and able to take the road gently leaning on Charlie's arm—

"I say, Charlie," he said, "wasn't it a blessing that I didn't succumb when about halfway up the cliff?"

Ingomar was smiling, but the boy shuddered as he thought of the narrow escape of the first lieutenant and Hans Armstrong himself, the two principal men of the expedition. Had the dreadful accident occurred, and the bold rescuer been obliged to quit hold while being hauled to bank, it would have cast a gloom over all the hands which nothing could ever have dispelled.

I believe if people would only try to look upon the bright side of things in this world, they would always find something to be thankful for.

The captain's cabin in the *Sea Elephant* was the largest and best in the ship. It was right aft, and



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“INGOMAR GAVE THE ORDER TO LOWER AWAY”

there was a minimum of noise above it. This was at once apportioned to the lieutenant, who had not yet recovered sensibility.

Nor did he for three long days.

The shock to brain and system generally had been very great, and would have killed a less strong man. Even the loss of blood, so said Dr. Wright, had been in no way against his patient.

Ingomar constituted himself Arnold's nurse, and a gentle and tender one he made, Charlie and Walt relieving him now and then.

Meanwhile, good work was being done on shore. Not only were observations both by night and day taken, and surveys made and soundings ascertained, but the sailors were now busy in the erection of a stone house or cabin, which was to be the abode of five men and an officer for probably a whole year—their home, indeed ; and a more dreary one than this it would be impossible to conceive, especially throughout the long and terrible winter. They were to have the companionship of two of the best dogs, plenty of provisions, and everything likely to conduce to their comfort, with books to read, and even games to while away the time. Moreover, they would be engaged every day in taking observations, for the advancement of science, for every little aids ; but, nevertheless, it would be—

“A weary time, a weary time.”

One evening Dr. Wright came into the saloon or mess-place.

He was looking sad.

"Has a change come?" said the captain.

"I fear so," said Wright.

"Then we need not ask what it is?"

"No ; I fear my patient is sinking, although, mind you, even yet there is hope."

It was one of those still nights which we find in these far Southern climes, when the stars shine clear and bright above, and are reflected from the dark, smooth sea, when, in the middle watch, hardly a sound is to be heard except the gentle lapping of the water around the stern, a sound that often resembles the talking of people in low, subdued monotones, only that and the solemn far-off boom of the waves breaking drowsily on the rugged rocks and shore.

Wright had given Ingomar his last instructions, and left him sitting quietly by the cotside, Arnold's favourite Eskimo dog near his feet, for the faithful beast could seldom be prevailed upon to leave the cabin or even to touch a morsel of food.

Presently, and most unexpectedly, the patient breathed a sigh, and opened his eyes. Ingomar was standing over him in a moment with his finger on his pulse.

That pulse was flickering and uncertain, but it seemed stronger ; but well did Hans know that these

signs might be but the forerunner of death and darkness.

A spoonful of cordial was held to the poor fellow's lips, and this he swallowed.

"Have—have I—been long ill? How——"

Ingomar smiled, but shook his head.

"Don't speak just yet awhile," he half whispered. "You have been ill, but now I think you will recover. Be of good cheer. I'll go for the doctor now."

When he returned with Wright, Ruby the dog was sitting by the bed with his cheek resting softly on his master's hand.

It was such a pretty show of affection that Ingomar would not disturb him.

Not long after this Curtis had fallen into a gentle sleep, and his nurse had resumed his watch.

The change, the happy change, had come during that sleep, the clogged wheels of life were once more moving steadily round, and when the doctor again entered the cabin, he pronounced him out of danger.

It was not until next night, however, and in the stillness of a night just like its predecessor, that the patient was allowed to talk a little, for Dr. Wright's orders were very peremptory, and were being carried out to the letter.

"Hans Armstrong," said Curtis, quietly, "you may tell me all."

Hans did so.

"And you saved my life?"

"That is little credit to me, Arnold. Some one else would have done so had I not."

"But it is a credit to you. I have reason to love the name of Armstrong; it will be a name dearer to me now than ever.

"But, Hans, when I am strong enough I am going to return to that crevasse, and descend."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, for there I must have dropped a gold locket, which contained a portrait of the girl I love."

Ingomar smiled.

"Keep your mind easy," he said. "I found the locket, and here it is. I did not open it—I deemed it sacred."

"Oh, thanks! thanks!" he cried, taking the trinket, and with somewhat shaky hands succeeding in opening it.

Probably one glance at the sweet face it contained did as much to place the patient out of danger as days of nursing.

"Look, Hans—look for yourself. Is she not beautiful?"

No wonder that Ingomar started as he looked upon it, rubbed his eyes, and looked again.

"Why—why——" he said.

"Yes, Hans, a portrait of *my* Marie."

"Nay, but *my* Marie—my sister Marie."

"Thank God," murmured Curtis.

He did not speak again for several seconds.

"I say thank God, Hans, for this reason. Ever since we met I have been struck by the strange likeness there is between you and Marie ; and being of the same name, I could not help thinking that you might be some near relative—a cousin, and perhaps a lover. My mind is now relieved, and I shall get speedily well."

"But still I am puzzled. Where did you meet poor Marie?"

"I met her at a ball in New York. I think, Hans, it was love at first sight. It was so with me, at all events. And though we have known each other for but a very short time, it seems as if we had been acquainted for years."

Ingomar was deep in thought.

"Did she speak of father and mother, and—of me?"

"She often talked of her father and mother, Hans, but seldom of you. She grew so sad when she mentioned you, and it was always as 'poor brother who is dead and gone.' And now, Hans, are we still as good friends?"

"Here is my hand, Arnold. It is a brother's hand ; I shall live in hopes of sister Marie and you

being happy—some day. But how strange we should have met, and that I should have saved your life!”

“I care little for life save for her.”

“True, Arne; I have felt like that myself before now, when in love with Cheena, the daughter of an Indian backwood chief.”

“Some day, Hans, you will tell me that story. But, Hans, there is something I still have on my mind; and if I unburden myself to you, I shall be in a fair way to happiness.”

“Here,” said Ingomar, “drink this first. I fear I am leading you into too much talk.”

Arnold did as he was told, then continued—

“It was after I knew your sister, and after we loved each other, that I found out your father was very wealthy, and that she would one day be so. This discovery made me very unhappy. Though I myself am connected with the peerage, my family are poor at present. I knew Marie would not believe I was trying to woo her for her wealth. Heavens! she would be rich had she not a single sou; but her father might object. And so I told her all.”

“And did it make any difference?”

“To Marie not the slightest. But to me it did. I was determined she should not bind herself to a roving sailor like myself. It was in grief and sorrow, ay, and in tears, that we parted. I had heard that one or two expeditions were bound for the Antarctic,

and I determined to join. I have done so, and I feel it is for the best. If I die—well, all will be over. If, during the years of enforced absence in these seas, Marie forgets me—well, all will be over just the same, and I still can pray for her happiness should I never see her more.”

“But,” said Ingomar, “suppose she does not forget you?”

“Ah! then,” said Arne, with a faint smile, “I may still dare to hope. This hope, dear Hans, I have. It is this hope that makes me live again, and this hope that I will cherish whatever happens.”

Once more he clasped Hans’ hand, and, still clasping it, fell into a gentle sleep. Ingomar now spread a rug over his knees, and went to sleep in Captain Bell’s easy-chair.

For Ingomar himself had a dream to dream.

CHAPTER VI

"TO THE WEST, TO THE WEST"

At the council or consultation that took place some days after this in the ward-room of the *Walrus*, both Charlie and Walt were present, but, of course, were not supposed to speak.

It was resolved therein that, instead of plunging at once into the great ice-pack, and attempting to find out the South Pole by one bold rush, the two ships should first spend ten or eleven months in sailing completely round the world that lies all beneath or south of the latitudes of Kerguelen and Cape Horn or Tierra del Fuego, and other southern lands around the Antarctic Continent.

But they were to sail in different directions, one, the *Sea Elephant*, going eastwards, the good old *Walrus* westwards.

Perhaps they might meet halfway round on the high seas. Anyhow—if all turned out well—they hoped once more to unite their forces at Kerguelen, and thence bear up for the pole itself, or, at all events, get South as far as possible.

This had not been the first intention of the expedition, but the officers thereof were, of course, right in altering their plans.

But what about the bears, and dogs, and the Eskimos themselves?

This was a matter for serious consideration. It was true that there was food enough for all on board the *Walrus*, and that during explorations, surveyings, and observation-taking all along the line of route, they would be able to catch enough fish to keep the bears and Yak dogs in good health and condition.

“With all my love for the creatures we are so fond of calling the lower animals,” said Captain Mayne Brace, “I must admit that bears and Yak dogs are not the very best shipmates one can possess. What say you, Mr. Milton?”

“No, sir; we found that out in bringing the beggars home. A bear doesn’t sleep so sweetly as a well-cared-for baby. Gruff is apt to wake at night to cough or yawn, and when he does so he wakes his wife, and she coughs or yawns; then the dogs join, and bedlam isn’t a circumstance to the row they make.”

“Well, now,” continued Brace, “I have a question to put. Why shouldn’t we leave them all here on Kerguelen till our return?”

“Why,” cried Captain Bell, “that is a splendid

idea of yours. The Yak-Yaks can build their own shelters, and feed and look after the whole pack. Are you agreeable to that proposal, Mr. Armstrong?"

"Oh, quite. In fact, Captain Bell, the bears and dogs are not the best companions; their voices are hardly melodious enough to conduce to sleep, and they are like Artemus Ward's elephants—they are powerful eaters. So *I* agree."

And all agreed. And as soon as everything was got ready on shore, both Eskimos and animals were landed; and then the two ships bade each other farewell, and each steamed away on her own track.

It will thus be seen that both vessels would sail round the world, and each would make different observations and explorations.

But for the present, at all events, we must sail away in the *Walrus*.

Strangely enough, for the first few days the men actually missed the bears and dogs.

Dumpty himself, who was very fond of Gruff and even Growley, used to stand staring in at the empty cage for a quarter of an hour at a time, and openly declared that he couldn't sleep half so well now the dear old chaps were gone; and many of the crew also thought the change was not one for the better. However, that remained to be seen.

I must remind the reader just here that, though neither Charlie nor Walter was bound apprentice, they were, nevertheless, already good sailors, and that, moreover, they determined to adopt the sea as a profession eventually. They now tried, therefore, to learn all they could, and were not too proud or lazy to help on deck, and even take their trick at the wheel.

This latter is hard work and weary, especially when the thermometer is at or below zero, a high wind blowing, and when your mittens get frozen to the spokes. It is bad enough in tropical seas, with the sun beating down almost vertically on one's head, the waves all aglitter with light and heat, and the pitch a-boil between the planks of the quarter-deck. And yet—having done both—I much prefer the heat to the excessive cold of Polar seas when steering.

Whenever time permitted, the boys now sought the companionship of Ingomar. He was a treasure, to their way of thinking. There was no feeling lonely when he was there, whether it were treading the decks by day or listening to his stories and talk at eventide.

Where he had picked up all his knowledge was a puzzle to both lads, and his yarns, at all events, bore an exceedingly strong resemblance to the truth.

There was plenty of music on board, and besides

this, almost every one could sing a bit. Before leaving Kerguelen the dogs generally began to sing when the band began to play. The bandsmen could now play in peace, and there was no Gruff nor Grumpey to imitate the trombone. Wallace the collie was far too much of a gentleman to interrupt. Well, there were games of all sorts to go in for in fine weather, and when the storms raged and stormy winds blew, they could read and yarn.

Perhaps the *Walrus* was not so well found in food and drinkables as an Atlantic liner. Yet there was enough, and everything was of the best.

What more could heart of sailor desire?

I think, though, that Ingomar, who remained in the *Walrus*, would have been glad if his friend Curtis had made one of the crew of this ship.

One word from the American and the transference would have been accomplished; but he did not speak that word. It would, he thought, look as if he, being the owner of the ships, were interfering with the arrangements thereof.

"Perhaps, after all," he said to himself, "it is better as it is. We don't know what may transpire yet. Arnold does not look a bit too strong, and—well, *I* should not like to see him sink and die."

* * * * *

"Right gaily goes a ship when the wind blows free." Thus sing some sailor lads.

And the wind did blow free, and fast also, some few days after the two discovery vessels parted company.

Not with the force of a gale, however, but that of a strong breeze, almost like a joyous trade wind, that filled the white and flowing sail and bent the gallant masts. This is perhaps a trifle too figurative, for the masts of ships like these would take a deal of wind before they bent, and when they did so, they would probably break. Of course the *Walrus* was not in low enough latitudes to catch the regular or trade winds.

These, it will do you, reader, no harm to know, are really north winds and south winds, that seem out of their course by the motion of the earth in its revolution. In the north of the equator, and its belts of calm and variable winds, and extending from about 10° N. lat. to about 30° N., we have the N.E. trades; and south of the equatorial belt we get, as you would naturally expect, the S.E. trades.

That is near enough for most landsmen to know. If, however, you ask why the winds blow towards the equator, I need only tell you that Nature abhors a vacuum. Well, along the great hot regions round the earth's waist you have such a vacuum, because heated air always ascends, and winds rush in from both sides to fill it up.

The winds far south of the trades have often, in

summer particularly, a northerly direction, because the ocean is here warmer than the ice. But these are very variable.

On the whole, perhaps, the study of the winds is best left to the meteorologist.

A single glance at a map of the Antarctic will show any one what a vast stretch of lonesome ocean there is betwixt Kerguelen and Tierra del Fuego, which is the lowest land of the great South American continent.

The wind to the *Walrus*, and to the *Sea Elephant* as well, would be ever welcome, unless it came in the somewhat questionable shape of a hurricane, because they must steam just as little as possible. The *Elephant*, it is true, had more than filled up at Mauritius. In fact, she had arrived at Kerguelen a bumper ship, with coals, coals everywhere, and these she had shared with the *Walrus*.

More than this, in the *Sea Elephant's* passage back to Kerguelen, she would probably call at the Cape to coal up again—or somewhere else; and, indeed, in a voyage such as this, a good deal has to be left to what is termed blind chance, though be assured chance never is or was blind—every wind and every current of the ocean is but obeying inexorable laws in blowing or flowing whither it does.

* * * * *

Navigation, nowadays, is so strange and difficult

a study to a mere outsider, or 'longshoreman, that although told that the *Walrus* was bearing up for the Crozet Islands, and although they could easily position these on the map or chart, and knew therefore that they lay to the nor'ard and west of Kerguelen, Charlie and Walt were considerably puzzled when they looked at the compass to see which way the ship's head was.

“We seem to be going a bit zigzag, don't we, Charlie, old man?” said Walt to his companion one fine forenoon.

“I thought so too, Walt; but I suppose we'll get there all the same. Come along. Don't puzzle your head; the dogs want a scamper, and luckily we're off duty.”

Everybody was dressed in extra clothing now, and this added considerably to everybody's breadth of beam, but especially, apparently, to Dumpty's. He was, indeed, a curious figure; and the Newfoundland and ship's collie all seemed to know there was something rather ridiculous about his build, and were never tired getting some fun out of him.

Dumpty had been throwing a wooden belaying-pin along the decks to-day, that the wise animals might have exercise. And this was a species of exercise they appeared to enjoy as much as a young man does football.

Collie himself was nearly always first in the field

or first to rush after and catch the belaying-pin. But unless he changed ground, or rather deck, and tried to get to Dumpty—who stood for goal—from the other side, he was rolled over, and had speedily to give up his prize, and fall back upon barking to relieve his mind.

But this forenoon they had varied the performance a bit, at a suggestion from big, beautiful Nick himself.

“Come on, Dumpty,” Nick seemed to cry. “You are better than a thousand belaying-pins. Hurrah!”

So he sprang at the droll little man, and down he went.

The two great dogs rolled Dumpty round and round, and over and over along the deck, in the funniest way possible, and with their paws, too, though whenever there was a hitch, Collie gave them a little assistance by seizing Dumpty’s jacket, and hauling him a yard or two.

In this way they rolled him to goal, which to-day was the quarter-deck.

Here they met the boys, and Nick and Nora were constrained to stand up to smile and gasp. This gave Dumpty a chance of escaping to the rigging, and then Charlie and Walter came in for it.

They did not “down” them; but while Nick sprang up and seized Charlie’s cap, Nora did the same for Walt, and then came the grand scamper

round and round the decks, four yards of solid Newfoundland and forty inches of collie.

The boys could do nothing but look on and laugh, till, tiring at last, the dear old dogs marched solemnly up and deposited their caps—unmarked by teeth—at their feet.

"Couldn't really help it," said Nick, apologetically, speaking with eyes and tail.

"And I only did what Nick did," said Nora, saucily.

The fiddles were hardly ever off the table now, for the sea, if not actually rough, was a bit lumpy, and there was plenty of motion. Hot soup is very nice and nourishing for a sailor's inside, but when a roll of the ship spills it all into his lap, it is not quite so pleasant.

Charlie, I think, was the better sailor, and though Walt often ventured into the crow's-nest, he was generally glad enough to get down again. The crow's-nest swung so, he explained. Well, it is not a very easy job to get there, as it is a cask with a railing at top, hoisted to and fixed but a little way under the main-truck. But no rigging leads right up to it, so you have to squirm up a Jacob's ladder from the main-top cross-trees, and to do this you must go quarter-way round the mast. This tries the head of a landsman, I can assure you. Most landsmen who had never been on horseback before, would

rather make up their minds to ride a buck-jumper than attempt to reach this same crow's-nest when there is a bit of seaway on, were it never so little.

It isn't fun—the first day—reaching even to the cross-trees. Then, having run the risk of your life—not being a Blondin—and gained a footing on the lower rungs of the Jacob's ladder, you cannot help wondering as you scramble up, hanging back downwards half the time, if it will give way with your weight, and which would be the easier way, when you do fall, to meet death—getting smashed up on the ship's bulwarks or being plunged headlong into the cold sea.

You enter through a trap-hole at the bottom, and though you may feel safe for just a little while, evil, discomfoting thoughts return, and you cannot be quite certain whether or not the crow's-nest is properly secured, or whether, if the wind begins to blow, you won't be emptied out altogether.

And then comes the going down again. You must not look below, or you may lose your head altogether. Just shut your eyes and open the trap, slue round after that, and make sure of your footing, then cautiously, foot over foot, you may reach the rigging, and afterwards the deck.

In cold weather a spell in the nest is really a terrible experience.

Yet Charlie never feared to face it, any more than

he would have funked a ride in a motor car against the wind on a stormy day.

But when one has got acclimatized to the crow's-nest, it is a real pleasure to be in it, and to have an eye on the sea and the cloudscape. There are splendid telescopes kept up here, and it is always nice to be the first to sight a craft of any kind, with only her topmasts rising over the far-off horizon.

It was Charlie who had the luck to first discover the Crozet Islands, and bleak and dismal they did look, for, this being summer, there was no snow on the rocks, but with his fine sight he could distinguish birds in myriads.

He felt quite a man, too, when he hailed the quarter-deck, trying to imitate the hoarse shout of the b's'n's mate with his ringing—

"Below there!"

"Ay, ay, *sir*," sang up the officer of the watch, putting particular emphasis on the "*sir*," more for fun, I think, than anything else.

"Thank you," said Captain Mayne Brace. "How does it lie?"

"About two points on the weather bow."

This was so nautical that the boy had to take a long breath after it, and wind himself up as it were.

But the hail, anyhow, although it had had the effect

of making even the man at the wheel smile a little, produced no little excitement on board, and more than one camera was got ready to take snapshots at the shore as soon as it put in an appearance from the deck.

CHAPTER VII

A FEARFUL NIGHT—ANTARCTIC LAND-ICE

“Land ho!” This is a cheering cry at times to the mariner. More especially if it be the chalky cliffs of Britain bold, and he is just returning from a long and weary voyage.

It is not so cheering if the ship is out of her course, and the shore looks a forbidding and inhospitable one, and if soon after this shout you hear another “Ready about!”

Nor did the looks of these storm-rent and surf-tormented rocks tend to raise the spirits of the wanderers in the *Walrus* to a very high degree.

But it was land all the same, and curiosity was excited in the heart of every one. Even Nick and Nora must stand with their paws on the bulwarks, and sniff longingly towards it.

As often as not, these islands or islets are enveloped in rain-clouds, snow-clouds, or fog, the wildest of waves wash their rocky shores, and it can hardly be said that there is a green thing upon them. But the birds love them all the same, and find sustenance

in the nesting season in various kinds of algæ or seaweeds, and in the shrimps with which the sea abounds.

A boat or two was lowered, and a landing-place found, and, as usual, observations and soundings were taken. The glass remained high, and there was every prospect of fine weather for a day or two at least, so sea-fishing was gone into with some success, eggs were collected, and made a valuable addition to the larder.

Then the voyage was continued, and the *Walrus* made in the direction of Marion Island, one of the Prince Edward group, lying in the same latitude.

The wind continued fair for a week, but somewhat ahead.

Then one afternoon it blew a little warmer, and veered more to the north.

"I fear we're in for a blow," said Captain Mayne Brace's acting mate. "Weather looks very dirty, sir, all about. Horizon creeping nearer, wind coming in nasty puffs, sea with a swell on it, and a falling glass, and——"

"That's enough, mate ; take in sail and reef. Just make her fit to encounter anything ; and, I say"—the mate had touched his cap and was retiring—"I think we might as well have fires ready to light, in case, you know."

"Ay, ay, sir. Thank you."

"Going to be bad weather, captain?" said Ingomar, entering the saloon just then.

"Not sure. Nothing is certain in these seas. It is dark enough to have the lights turned on, but that makes things look gloomy when one goes on deck."

"Yes; and the sudden transition from bright light to comparative darkness is certainly somewhat depressing."

"Anyhow, boys all, there's two things I don't mean to do, and one I've made up my mind to. I'm not going to be blown back if I can help it; I'm not going to waste my precious coals so as to have to burn the bulkheads in an emergency; and if the wind doesn't go with me, why, I'll go with the wind."

"Hurrah!" cried Ingomar. "That is capital policy all through."

The boys clapped their hands, because it occurred to them that it was the best thing to do.

Everything was conducted during this voyage with the greatest regularity. The very same precautions as to lights was taken at night—though small, indeed, was the likelihood of a ship being met—as would have been observed in steering up or down our own English Channel. There were three watches, so that, in these inclement seas, the men might not suffer from fatigue; the temperature of the water and air

had to be taken each watch; the sky and clouds observed, and the force of the wind marked, etc., and all was logged. Notes were taken even of the appearance of seals or whales, the flight of birds, the colour of the sea and floating seaweed. *One* well-kept log of a voyage is of great use to future mariners who sail the same seas; from *many* logs so kept, are deduced about all that science knows of winds and seas and ocean currents.

In a few minutes after the mate had gone on deck, the ship seemed to stop suddenly short, to stand suddenly still, and the sails began to flap uncertainly. There was much confusion now on deck, and slacking off of sheets and shouting of orders, for the mate knew not from which side the wind would come next.

Then there was a vivid flash of lightning, which almost blinded the eyes of those below. Another and another followed quickly, and were succeeded by louder thunder than most people ever listen to.

Then the wind!

The shifting, ever shifting wind! For the *Walrus* was in a little cyclone. Certainly not little as regarded force, but still in extent small enough to be called a whirlwind. Yet such whirlwinds as these are strong enough to sink any ship that ever sailed if not most carefully handled.

There was another circular squall after this, then

a third and fourth, and lo ! the steady gale came on in earnest, blowing terrifically from the N.N.W.

Now God save the good ship in the darkness of such an awful night as this !

For the wind brought with it its own waves, its own cold spray, its own wild showers of driving rain and sleet and hail combined. It brought something worse—it brought streams of small ice-blocks, and streams of deep snowy slush, passing through which the ship was strangely steady, because never a green sea rolled on board.

It is just on such a night as this long and terrible one that, with the horizon a mere background of blackness to the dimly lighted bulwarks, a wind that shrieks and howls like wild wolves, a wind that even head down one cannot face, but must creep side first against, clutching at rope or stay, and gasping as if engulfed in the dark cold water just beyond ; it is on just such a night as this, I say, that the mariner in these far Southern seas, having taken in every bit of canvas he can spare, and done his best for his good ship from bowsprit to glimmering binnacle, must place his trust in Providence, feeling that he is in the hands of Him who can hold the ocean in His palm, and bring him safely through the danger.

The captain himself did not come below until the beginning of the middle watch. He was wet and shiny in his oilskins and sou'wester.

Ingomar had turned in.

The boys had not undressed, but had lain down to talk fearfully, just in front of the stove, with the dogs their only companions.

They had been especially terrified by the loud rattling of some sails that had carried away while the gale was still at hurricane force.

"What! not in bed yet, lads?"

"No," said Charlie. "Fact is, sir, I'd rather be drowned with my clothes on, and Walt here thinks the same."

Mayne Brace laughed.

"I can't blame you, though. I was once young myself. But bustle now, boys; find your way into the pantry, switch on the light, and see what you can find to eat."

This was very cheering language, not only because they knew that the captain would not think of having supper, if he thought the ship was going down an hour or so after, but because they themselves were hungry enough to swallow an octopus.

An exciting night of storm has always that effect on the seafarer.

Charlie with the cold beef, Walter with sardines, onions, bread, and butter, soon staggered out of the pantry again, and as speedily returned for knives and forks, and plates, and cruets, and dainty sauces.

There was hot coffee in an urn over the stove, and

preserved meat ; and what a glorious supper they did make to be sure ! You would not have said that there was a deal of funk about those boys' hearts had you seen them ply their knives and forks. But the funniest thing about the matter was this—hardly had they got settled down to serious eating before a state-room door opened, and lo ! behold Ingomar in the robes of night (pyjamas) standing swaying and smiling, and holding fast to the bulkhead.

“I'll join you, if you please,” said Ingomar.

And he did with a hearty good will too. The dogs, of course, partook of the banquet.

The boys felt happy and a bit drowsy after this, and turned in.

Storm still raging next morning. Uncomfortable motion. Wind still more to the north, and ship lying-to almost under bare poles.

And so it blew and blew on and off for well-nigh a week.

Then surcease of a storm and tempest, such as it is the experience of but few to face at this season of the year in these lower latitudes.

And where were they now ? Why, still in the longitude or meridian of the Crozet Islands, but, despite their well-conducted war with the elements, several degrees further south. In very truth, they might just as well have sailed here to Enderby Land straight from Kerguelen.

Everybody was pleased one beautiful morning to find that wind and sea had both gone down. It was nice to sit down to a warm and comfortable breakfast, without fear of having the lower extremities par-boiled with hot coffee.

The boys had had their sea-water bath this morning early at wash-decks time. This consisted simply in rushing forward, jumping, and skylarking like white savages, and having the hose played on them. But it made them hungry.

Forward, the men's talk was chiefly about the recent heavy weather.

"Joy to you, Jack," said Dumpty to a companion, "but this doesn't seem much like getting round the globe, do it?"

"It don't, Dumpty, and that's a fact," was the reply. "But it's all in the voyage, little 'un, and the more months the more cash, and that's how I looks at it."

The captain's face and Ingomar's too were wreathed in smiles as they sat down to the good things sent forward.

"Seems," said the former, "we're going to go zig-zagging round the world."

"Yes. Going to resume your course now?"

"No; the wind brought us here. I'll forego the Marions now, and bear up for the Boukets and Lindsays, weather permitting; but not until we now

have a look at the country the storm has been unkindly enough to drive us to *nolentes volentes*."

"I wonder where the *Sea Elephant* is about this time?"

"Ah, it would be hard to say, but the gale that we encountered, if it has passed far on to the east, would have been more favourable for them, and they are now in open seas off Budd or even Knox Land. They'll beat us in the race round the world, you'll find."

Every one had the greatest faith in the sturdy old *Walrus*, for icebergs to her were nothing, so long as she did not get into a powerful squeeze.

The "ice blink," a reflection like snow on the horizon over the pack, was seen that forenoon early, and Mayne Brace headed away directly for it. He judged himself to be about the longitude of Cape Anne, and he was right.

Young sailors like Charlie and Walt wondered a little that they did not sooner come into fields of slush and streams of smaller ice, that of broken-up floes and hummocks.

"The reason is simply this, boys," said the skipper. "That kind of stuff has all been hurled back to the edge of the pack on the main barrier of ice by the force of the northerly wind.

"This land-ice is quite different," he continued, "from any you have ever encountered in the North

Pole regions. Our earlier navigators in their tubs of ships sighted it, and some of them sailed along its edge for hundreds of miles; and as they could find no inlet before they were driven off by storms, they jumped to the conclusion that this great barrier, this solid, cliff-like wall of blue or green or striated ice, hundreds of feet in height at some places, went all around the Antarctic, warning them that thus far might they come but no farther."

"But what, then," said Charlie, "do you mean by land-ice? I'm all in a fog."

"Well, lad, you must first imagine a time in the remote ages when this great unknown Antarctic continent was a land of mountain, forest, and flood, with rivers finding their way down very extensive valleys to pour their bright waters into the sea. Imagine, too, if you please, that these beautiful valleys were in ages far remote from ours clad in verdure, in jungle, heath, and forest, and that a fauna distinct from ours existed here, that immense mammoths and mastodons dwelt here, and mayhap flying alligators, though probably no other creature at all bearing any resemblance to the form of human beings.

"Then let this age pass out of your mind, and another and colder period slowly commence—a glacial period, for instance, during which the rivers and lakes were frozen, and there was no more

rainfall, because the mists or dews driven over yonder continent were then condensed, and fell as snow. The long storms of winter would soften and the snows melt somewhat during the Antarctic summer, to form ice again when the dark, wild weather returned. So the valleys would be partially filled up with great glaciers. These must move down towards the sea, though extremely slowly—broad Mississippis of ice and snow. When this so-called land-ice reached the water, it would form a barrier, and monster bergs would get detached and float away, leaving the striated cliffs with their wave-washed caves at the edge. In the gigantic, snow-covered, square blocks that float away on the currents of ocean, these caves form archways, so that you can sometimes see right through the bergs, or even sail a boat through them.

“Well, that is land-ice, but the sea-ice is formed of something like the same pancake and hummocky ice we find in the far, far north, and the peculiarity of the Antarctic seas of ice is this—the land-bergs, if I may so call them, often get embedded or entangled in pack-ice, high above which their great bulk heaves, as towers a ship of battle above a tug-boat or dinghy. In course of time the land-bergs are hollowed and tunnelled by the waves on which they float, till they break-up, or divide, forming the strangest-shaped pieces imaginable.

"Another thing which proves that a long way into the interior of this South-polar region land extends is this—*débris* of earth and blocks of rock are brought down on the glacier that, as an examination of the sea's bottom proves, could have descended in no other fashion."

"It is all very wonderful!" said Charlie.

"I wonder," said Walter, "if any mermaids dwell in these caves of ice?"

Captain Mayne Brace smiled and answered.

"I hope," he said, "to give you an opportunity of discovering for yourself, my dear boy."

But the *Walrus* reached the pack of sea-ice at last; and the sight, though not perfectly new to mariners who had sailed the Arctic seas, was at least very wonderful, and had a cold kind of beauty about it, which it is difficult indeed to describe.

And far, far away in the interior, mountains covered with everlasting snow raised their great peaked heads on the horizon.

No life?

Well, no animals, not even a leopard, seal, or sea-elephant, but droves of droll penguins, standing on end, and looking, at a distance, for all the world like a crowd of lazy boys just let loose from a Sunday school, who had been warned not to soil their clothes by romping.

CHAPTER VIII

WONDROUS SCENERY—NICK SAVES THE LIFE OF WALLACE

The hummocks in this pack were not like those in Greenland seas, which are generally rounded off by wind and snow. These were more like pieces of ice set on end, and were of every conceivable shape or form.

But not far away from the sea-edge was a most gigantic fellow of a land-iceberg. It was quite as large as five and forty St. Paul's Cathedrals formed into one. Peaked here and there it was too, and the outlines of these peaks were rounded off with snow.

It was evident that this magical monster had been to sea a time or two, and that, moreover, he would go north again on the first chance, quickly dashing aside the pigmies that now impeded his progress, forced along by wind and current.

The *Walrus* lay-to off the pack-edge for a day or two, that observations, soundings, and a survey of

the sea's bottom, etc., might be taken. For Mayne Brace did not mean to work through at present, and risk the chance of being beset.

But boats were sent off, that our heroes, and even the dogs, might have a scamper.

Though too rough for ski, or snow-shoe travelling, the ice-pieces were pretty close together, and it was easy for everybody to leap from one to the other, and so on and on till at long last they reached the berg, and made an attempt to get to the summit. This was much harder than was at first expected, especially for the dogs, but these were determined to follow their leader ; and so, often stumbling, sometimes slipping, many down again, they struggled on until they got to the top.

They had their snow-shoes over their backs, and although there was some danger of their going over a cliff or icy precipice, they enjoyed an hour's really good fun. They would have tarried here much longer, but noticed that the signal for recall had been hoisted ; and so, as soon as they had erected a pole, with a round black ball on the top, and the name of the vessel cut in the handle, they started to retrace their steps.

The hoisting of the pole took a longer time than they had reckoned on, for they had to cut the hard surface of the snow first with their Jack-knives, and get the dogs to complete the excavation with their

busy fore-feet. This they encouraged them to do by pointing to the hole and saying "Rats!"

Now, I don't believe that either Nick or Nora expected to find a rat in such a place, but that they merely worked away to please the boys.

None too soon did they reach the boats, for lo! the ice was opening, and the small bergs getting farther and farther apart. As it was, one man received a ducking which he would remember till his dying day.

If a strong current ran under the ice, it would have been easy for it to have carried him away. In Greenland seas there is extra danger in such an immersion, for sharks are always on the watch there when men are on the ice, and no one would care to be made a meal of by these scaly monsters.

Two boats had come on shore, and, as usual in such cases, a race was got up—and oh, there is no race so exciting as that between real sailors with good honest broad-beamed boats. Ingomar offered as a prize a bottle of rum and pound of "baccy" to the winning whaler. So the men must even doff their heavy jackets to the work.

Noticing what was up, all hands on board crowded into the rigging, and small innocent bets were made, such as clay pipes or postage stamps that had only been once in use.

The men in each boat were about equal in weight.

Charlie was cox'n of one, Walt of the other, and Hans himself gave the signal.

Then, had you been there, you might have heard such shouts or encouraging words from the boys to their crews as—

“Up with her now!”

“Cheerily does it!”

“Hurrah, men! Hurrah!”

“We're winning!” from Charlie.

“We'll beat them, boys!” from Walter.

“Touch her up!”

“Merrily goes it!” etc.

And Walt's boat had soon forged ahead at least two lengths, then—

“Now, lads,” roared Charlie—“now, lads, give them fits! We've got to win.”

And on rushed the whalers, every man doing his most.

It was likely, after all, to be a win for Walter, when, unluckily, his boat touched a bit of green ice, which caused a man to catch a crab, and, with a loud cheer from those on board, Charlie dashed madly past, and won by a length.

Then cheers, loud and long, rose from the rigging, with many a mighty hurrah, and when Charlie scrambled in-board, he was hoisted and carried three times round the deck shoulder high, the men singing merrily.

Then the boats were hoisted, with the dogs still in them, and they soon joined the merriment, you may be sure.

But everybody seemed happier for what was called their spin on shore.

* * * * *

Shortly after this more sail was set, and the vessel headed away for the west, tack and half-tack, for the wind was not yet fair.

That same afternoon they rounded Cape Anne.

This point of rocky land juts far into the sea here. It is a wonderful sight in summer when the black rocks stand out and the higher cliffs are still covered with purest snow.

But what a world of life was here—in the sea, on the cliffs and shore, where cities of countless, I may say myriads, of birds were built.

Sea-leopards and other phocine creatures were all around in multitudes.

It was determined to risk another lie-to, for the water was too deep to anchor, and they must not venture near those mountain peaks, for unknown seas have a disagreeable habit of shoaling suddenly, and if it is not low water when a ship is stranded, poor indeed is her chance of ever getting off again.

The day was very long now, but still there was a marvellous sunset to-night. Strange colours, rubies,

greens, and orange, lingered long on the mountain and snow-cliffs full half an hour after the sun went down. And after the stars shone out, a quarter moon sailed slowly up, but seemed to detract in no whit from their wondrous brightness.

High above shone the Southern Cross, a constellation which in this country can, of course, never be observed. The scene about midnight, when Ingomar and the boys came up to have a last look at it before turning in, might well have been called solemn, but for the strange noises which hardly ever ceased.

Here and there, near to the ship even, was the hissing and hurtling as of a ship blowing off steam, and looking in the direction from which these came, great fountains or geysers could be noticed in the pale light. Whales were blowing. Other sounds, and sighs, and cries, and snortings, and moanings were incessant, and now and then longdrawn cries, proceeding whence or from what no one could ever guess.

For the rocks were covered with skuas, cormorants, and many a curious bird never met with in Northern waters.

"Do these creatures never sleep, I wonder?" asked Charlie.

"Hardly ever in early December," said Captain Mayne Brace, who stood near him, "because, Charlie,

this is the season of love and joy, and the shores are covered with nestlings, who would hardly permit their parents to sleep, if they wished to."

"But I suppose they sleep sometimes?"

"They just have a nap or a nod or two now and then, when Nature won't be denied any longer.

"But I say, boys, there is no reason why you should sit up all night, even if yonder birds and beasts do. Off with you and turn in."

Charlie's sleep was very dreamful that night, and so was Walter's too.

But what they had seen the day before was nothing to the sights that met their gaze next morning when the boats landed.

They had been told to land on a white tongue of land where penguins were marching about and sea-leopards lolling in the sunshine, half-standing on their flippers to stare at the advancing boats, scratching themselves, and assuming the most ridiculous attitudes imaginable.

They had the pleasure of seeing several whales, and it was well they did not come into anything like close contact with these, or a nasty capsizes would have been the consequence.

The seals were not a bit afraid of them, and hardly troubled to shuffle away into the water. Those who did made splendid dives. Charlie could not help envying them, but he himself would not

have cared to dive into so dark and deep and cold a sea.

Some of the smaller ones were pole-axed (clubbed) because the flesh is palatable, and fried seal's-liver and bacon make a capital breakfast dish.

Close to the precipitous ice-cliffs they had been warned not to venture, and indeed, while gazing and wondering at these as they shone and shimmered in the sunshine, a terrible explosion took place. High up a portion of the ice-wall fell, thundering and splashing into the sea, where it was splintered into pieces.

It fell right into the midst of a portion of water black with the heads of wondering seals, yet not one floated up dead, so nimbly had they dived beneath.

The camera-men and general observation-takers managed to climb a snowy mountain-peak, and I need hardly say that our heroes formed three of the party.

The sight that met their gaze from this lofty altitude, was one which once seen could never be forgotten.

Let those who tell us that scenery of Antarctic ice is dead and monotonous come here. Here was no monotony, and they could see to such a distance icebergs, small and great, afloat on the blue ocean (the sky was blue); an island or two on

the horizon of the north; to the south and west a long stretch of hilly shores, with snow-whitened, rugged peaks, little ice, big ice, ice of every form or shape that could be imagined, clouds and cloudlets in the sky, rolls of cumulus, lines of stria and patches of cirrus. As for life, that was everywhere beneath them. Such crowds of beautiful sea-birds, especially gulls, had never before been witnessed, and the water was alive with life.

"Look, oh look!" cried Charlie, pointing to a particular spot just beneath. Here was a strange-looking monster, indeed—a real live sea-elephant, called so from the length of his proboscis. But king of the seas he is here, and other seals were crowding round him as if taking counsel, or—what is more probable—to scare him away by the might of their numbers. But he dashed them proudly away and soon disappeared. Like the great bladder-nose of the Arctic, he is a rather lonesome animal, and prefers to be.

With their lorgnettes they could see from such a height as this far down into the sea-depths. It was a busy time with the sea-leopards, for they were teaching their puppies how to swim with grace and celerity, and how long to stay below before Nature craved for a mouthful of fresh air. Some of them held their offspring between their flippers, and these were evidently giving suck.

Luncheon was partaken of, about 1700 feet above the sea level.

Lanes of water, south and west, could be seen penetrating into loughs or inland seas; but on this being reported to Captain Mayne Brace, he decided not to explore.

Lest I forget it, I should mention here, that the huge iceberg, on which the signal broom was hoisted, near to Cape Anne, was encountered far to sea many months after this by the *Sea Elephant*. The commander was greatly puzzled, but hauled yards aback and lowered a boat, thinking there must be shipwrecked men on the berg, part of the crew of some other expedition. They were even more puzzled when they found the name *Walrus* burned upon the pole. But this episode served to show the drift of the ocean current of the wind, for it was found far to the west, between South Georgia Islands and the great ice-pack.

On their way further to the west, the *Walrus* encountered weather fair and fine. They kept inwards, therefore—passing many huge striated icebergs, some caved, others tunnelled through and through—until they reached the Bouvet Isles, in latitude about 53° South and longitude 2° to 5° East.

They are volcanic in origin, as might easily be expected, and were first discovered by Captain

Bouvet, who, however, could give but little account of them, owing, first to dense fogs, and secondly to the rocky little uninviting group being so closely packed around with ice-floes.

After seeing all here that could be seen, and catching many specimens of strange seals, as well as birds, the vessel's direction was altered from N.W. to W. by S., and in due time, with few further adventures, and a considerable deal of monotonous sailing, they reach the Sandwich group, which lies in from 55° to 60° South and somewhere about 30° to the west.

These islands were all volcanic, as far as could be made out, and, indeed, in one of them, nearly the farthest north, smoke still issues from a half-burnt-out cone.

Almost every bottle, as it was emptied, was thrown overboard. After letters were written, they were corked, waxed, and well sealed. Some of these, strange to say, were picked up nearly a year afterwards on the shores of South America. And these, of course, were duly forwarded to England.

Some were, half a year after this, picked up by the *Sea Elephant*, and joyful enough were all hands to learn that all was going well on the sister ship.

* * * * *

West, and away ever west.

West, and still further south ; and one morning,

when the sun was unusually bright and clear, Charlie had the satisfaction, from the crow's-nest, of discovering mountain peaks ahead.

Unfortunately for our young hero, these had been discovered generations before his time, else his name would be handed down in ocean history.

Never mind, when he hailed the quarter-deck, Charlie was just as proud as a pouter pigeon who discovers three eggs in her nest instead of the legitimate two.

The observations were continued, for science' sake, and at great risk too, for half a gale of wind was blowing from the south-east, and the sea roared wild and angrily, so that to land a boat was impossible.

So no one was sorry when they bade farewell to this strangely inhospitable group of islands. They were covered entirely with snow, and it was found from soundings that the bottom around was not of volcanic formation. This, at all events, was something to know.

They had hardly seen the sun for weeks, fogs prevailed as well as high, uncertain winds, so that navigation had been considerably impeded.

Just one adventure they had on leaving these islands. Somehow, while racing about, poor Wallace, the collie, managed to leap clean and clear over the bows.

Every one loved that dear dog, and he was said to be far wiser and more sagacious than even Nick himself.

Be this as it may, he had not the same swimming power, and what followed fully proved this.

A life-buoy was let go almost *instantly*, and some confusion ensued.

At first it was thought that a lifeboat could hardly live in that wild sea; but Ingomar himself pleaded with the captain to make the attempt, and the ship was being stopped, and the men standing by to lower, when the captain gave the order.

But now comes the strange point. Nick had seen all, and as soon as the command was given he sped quickly aft and dived overboard.

The collie was far astern; but, rising on the crest of a wave, Nick could see him, and barked joyously.

It was a sight to see that boat leave the vessel's side, and to mark the stern-set faces of her brave British crew. They were only going to save a dog! Is that what you say, my gentle boy reader? All the more honour to them for risking their lives in the cause.

They found the dogs at last, the Newfoundland with his head turned shipward, the collie resting his fore-paws on his strong shoulders.

And when the boat was hoisted, at last, and the lifeboat men, the gallant dog, and rescued collie, oh, then, I say you ought to have been on board to listen to the wild cheering, and to see the men crowding forward to caress the beautiful Nick.

CHAPTER IX

WITH HOBSON ON THE "MERRIMAC"—THE STORY THAT CURTIS TOLD

Both Curtis and Ingomar were capital story-tellers or "yarn spinners," and the tales they told the boys helped to while away the time on many a forenoon which might otherwise have felt long. I give the following as specimen ; it was told by Curtis :—

"I liked Jack Hardy from the very first day I clapped eyes on him. Had I got that lad into the British Navy, I should have been proud to have seen him among his pals drawn up for inspection on the flagship's deck, first Sunday after entering. But this young Jack was an American Jack, and his ship was the bold *Iowa*, on which my hammock was hung *pro temp.*, and the time was very shortly after the capitulation or capture of Santiago, and destruction of the fleet of Cervera.

"The American-Spanish War didn't last long enough to please me, but it did rip and rattle and roar in Cuba and all around the island after the first ship spat angry fire. You shall earn my eternal gratitude,

boys, if you bring any one up with a round turn who dares call it 'a *little* war.' I tell you what it is, the book isn't written yet that shall describe one-half the gallant deeds done by our brave cousins, on land and at sea, during those brief summer months of eighteen hundred and ninety-eight.

" 'The Spaniards never had a chance,' some may tell you.

"But the Spaniards *had*, and Admiral Cervera had also; and if his gunners had been smart and good, and with some degree of dash and go about them then, with his splendid ships he might have done wonders, and the war might still be raging.

" 'Manaña!' (ma - nyah-na — to - morrow). 'Manaña!' is the beggarly whine for ever on the lips of the Dons, be they seamen or soldiers.

"But 'To-day!' is America's battle-cry. Jackie just flings off his jacket and goes at it hammer and tongs, like a true-born Briton. And God give us gunners, lads, like the Americans, when our own day of battle dawns.

"Well, about Jack Hardy? He was a fine, open-countenanced boy, say seventeen or a little over. He really hadn't been a year in the service, hardly time for some to get used to their sea-legs. But the lad was a sailor already—you could have told that at a glance—a sailor every inch, from his purser's shoes to his broad blue-banded cap and collar, and his cheerful,



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“HE HAILED THE QUARTER-DECK”

willing, brick-dust face. Guess it was his splendid, spreading bare brown neck that first drew my attention to Jack. Give me a boy, or a dog either, that has a well-put-on neck ; he's got the sand in him. You can bet your blouse on that. Take your turtle-necked chap on shore again. He is no good for the navy, and a turtle-necked dog isn't worth the price of a rope to hang him.

"Now, the American man-o'-war's courtesy is well known, so is my modesty. But the latter is *sui generis*. For example, if I required to borrow money from a friend to get me a dinner, I should never ask for a dollar, if there was the ghost of a chance of getting a guinea. So when Captain Hotchkiss, in his kindly way, said to me, 'Want to do Santiago, do you, Curtis? Press, eh? Very well, you can choose a man and boy as body-guard,' I chose Hardy, and a fine old sailor not long promoted to the rank of bo's'n's mate—the two best hearts in the ship ; and the latter, I knew, had been with Hobson in the *Merrimac*, and I hoped, therefore, to worm a *vivâ voce* yarn out of him before we came off from shore again.

"Now, I had been to Santiago before—years ago—and I rather liked it then. I can remember it even now as I speak, remember it as a lovely dream, a romance—with a beautiful Spanish girl in it whom I—— But never mind, the ruthless fingers of Time have long since torn that leaf from the log of my young

life. But somehow I expected to find Santiago on this bright and beautiful forenoon, as my boat went dancing over the blue bay, just as I had left it in the days of 'Auld Lang Syne.' I had but to close my eyes to see once more all its greenery and quaintness, with its quiet court-yards where flowers and fruit trees grew ; where, when moon or stars shone bright and fire-flies rose and fell among the foliage, I used to listen to the tinkle of the lute—Lucia's lute, Lucia in robes of white, with dark mantilla thrown carelessly over her raven hair, and a flower on her breast, a flower I never left without.

" 'I say, bo's'n'—I had opened my eyes now wide enough—'I say, doesn't the breeze smell rather—er—er—gamey?'

"The good fellow laughed. 'That it do, sir,' he said. 'Santeehager ain't what it used to be by a jugful. You'll find it ain't the sweetest o' perfoomery now. Sometimes it's wusser'n others. Sometimes, when seven miles at sea, ye might hang your souwester on the perfoom o' sweet Santeehager!'

"My romance, my dream of fair women fled just then, and didn't return.

"Well, I have seen a city or two after a siege and bombardment, and I know as well as anybody how many 'r's' there are in horrór, but the sights I saw that day I had better make no attempt to describe. How American and Spanish troops could live and

laugh in such a place as this, even with assistance from the bodegas, was more than I could tell. Ruins everywhere, sometimes whole rows of them, with fallen roofs and blackened rafters; streets and lanes and piazzas obstructed with broken furniture of every sort; vilely smelling currents of black filth, and pools and lakelets of the same; and—mercy on us!—corpses everywhere in the quieter squares—corpses of wretches who had crawled there to die; corpses reeking in the sunlight; corpses that even the clouds of horrid vultures refused to put a talon in.

"Such was Santiago. I had come for copy, and I soon had enough of it.

" 'Let's get out of this, bo's'n. Can't we spend the night up yonder among the hills and palm trees?'

" 'Yes,' the good fellow answered, cheerily. 'And luckily the wind's about a N.N.E.'

"We didn't leave the city empty-handed, though. One hotel was doing a roaring trade, and when we found ourselves, an hour before sunset, high up among the woods, we had enough of the good things of this life to have stood a five days' siege.

"Perhaps we didn't make a hearty supper! Oh no, sailor-men never eat and drink!

"We had some wine anyhow, for our stomachs' sake, let me say, and to eliminate the perfume of sweet Santiago, which seemed still to hang around us.

"The sunset was ineffably beautiful, the clouds

and the bay were streaked with the colours of tropical birds; of those very birds that sang their evening songs above us, while the breeze sighed through the foliage.

"Twilight does not last long here, however, but a big round moon rose slowly over the hills, and there would be neither darkness nor danger to-night.

"‘I say, bo’s’n,’ I cried, ‘you were in the *Merrimac* with gallant Hobson. Tell us your version. Have another cigar, and another glass of wine. Keeps away infection, you know.’

"The bo’s’n needed no second bidding. He had a bo’s’n’s nip—four fingers high—and the wine was brandy too.

"‘Ahem! Yes, I was in the *Merrimac*, and so was Jack Hardy, here.’

"‘Well,’ I cried, ‘I *am* in luck. Wait, bo’s’n, till I light up. Now, then, heave round, my friend. Sure you’re not thirsty?’

"‘No, sirree. I feel that last little tot in my eye like. Ever seen Hobson? Well, you’ll like ’im when you does. You’ve seen a yacht, spick and span, new, that can rip through a stormy sea, hang or move like a Mother Carey’s chicken, and do ’most anything. That’s him. That’s Hobson. Bless you, sir, the old men didn’t like the youngster’s brave proposal at first. They pooh-poohed it, as ye might say. Even Schley himself laughed a little, as, in his fatherly

way, he put a hand on young Hobson's shoulder. I was as close to 'em, sir, as I am to Jack here. "Admiral Cervera," he says, "is in yonder right enough. Only wish the beggar would come out. He's bottled."

"“Ay, admiral,” says Hobbie, as we calls him for fond like, “and I want to cork the bottle. Give me that old collier the *Merrimac*, and, with a few volunteers, I'll take her in and sink her right across the narrow neck, 'twixt Canores and Estrella Points, and——”

““And where will you and your men be then?” says Schley.

““I'll give you my word of honour, sir, I'll go to heaven, almost cheerfully, as soon's we bottle up the dirty Don! Besides, sir,” he says, “why smash that fine fleet up, when it would make so grand an addition to the American Navy?”

““Yes; and it were that very argerment, I guess, that carried the pint, wi' the captains in council assembled. Volunteers! Ay, in course; half the navy would have volunteered to steam to certain death with young Hobson. It was the forlornest o' hopes ever led.

““Look you, see, sir.’ The bo's'n paused a minute to draw with his knife a rough sketch of Santiago bay and city on the ground.

““That's my map, like, o' the place lying down

yonder beneath us in the moonlight. Them things there at sea is the fleet—our fleet. You'll have to take Cervera's for granted, but one of his ships lay here, you see, to guard the entrance. The crosses is the batteries, and they did blaze and batter us that awful night!'

"The bo's'n paused a moment, and laid his hand affectionately on Jack Hardy's shoulder.

"‘Me and my young pal here,’ he continued, ‘had known one another for months afore then. There was something about the lad that made me like him. See'd him throw his extra garments one day and go like thunder for big Nat Dowlais, 'cause he'd kicked the ship's cat. Ay, and welted him well, too. I took to talkin' more to Jack after that. But I couldn't get down deep enough to the boy's heart. There was something under the surface; I could tell that. Jack was no ordinary bit o' ship's junk. Bless you, sir, there's hundreds o' gentlemen's sons before the mast—but they're not all like Jack Hardy. Jack was more like a stage sailor than anything else. Everything he put on was so darned natty—his hands so white and soft, though his face and neck was brown. Then he talked American like a book. Played the piano, too, like a freak, and was often in the ward-room in consequence. And blowed if I didn't hear the master-at-arms—bloomin' old brass-bound Jimmy Legs—more'n once call him “sir.”’

"Well, the *Merrimac* was 'long-side and ready. Incloodin' Lieutenant Hobson himself, eight of us were chosen for this deed o' danger. Torpedoes were arranged in the hold. Hobson would stand by the helmsman, Hobson would touch the button and sink her, and, at a word, we should leap into the sea and swim for the dinghy towin' astern, for this was our only hope o' salvation.

"Jack, here, had stood by my side among the volunteers, but the poor lad was passed over. Don't nudge me, Jackie lad; I'm goin' to tell the truth, the whole bloomin' truth, and nothin' but—so there! I'll never forget, sir, the look o' disappointment on the lad's face just then. Some time after, I found him for'ard with his back to the ship and his face to the sea. He looked smartly up, but I could see by the starlight there were tears on his face.

"He said nothing, but walked away impatient like, and I saw him no more *for a time*.'

"The bo's'n leaned towards me now, and his eyes sparkled in the moonlight. He touched my knee with his horny palm.

"We steamed away,' he said, in a hoarse half-whisper—'steamed into the darkness and away from the flag-ship. Not a sound for a time save the hollow dump o' the screw and the swirl o' the seethin' seas!

"In silence we steamed—it might have been for

half an hour, but it seemed like an age—an age of blackness and terror. Nothing was natural like. The ship was a death-ship, the figures agin the bulwarks yonder were spectres. I would have given worlds to have heard but a word, a laugh, a cough even!

“‘I said there were *eight* of us! By the sky above us yonder, sir, there were *nine*!

“‘I guessed at once who the ninth was, and I shuddered a bit when I thought of brave, foolish Hardy here. For never a stroke could he swim, and his coming with us to-night was sheer madness—nay, more, it looked like suicide.

“‘Soon after Jack slid slowly up towards me, and his left arm clutched my right as I clutch yours now. Every one of us, sir, was stripped to the waist. Every one wore a lifebelt save Jack Hardy. He was a stowaway, and not in it.

“““Oh, boy,” I said, speaking in a whisper, “why have you done this?”

“““Hush!” he answered. “My time is mebbe short, mate, and you’ve always been my friend. So listen. Something tells me you’ll be saved, but I am here to die. I want you to bear a message to my parents—to my mother especially. Her address you’ll find in my ditty-box. But go to see her, Sam, when the war is over. Far away west my people live in opulence, and I’m an only son.

Father taunted me with cowardice, and I ran away and came to sea. Tell father I forgave him. Tell mother——" Ah, sir, just here the lad broke down. He's only a boy. "Tell mother," he sobbed, "how her Jack died for his country. Tell her I felt she'd forgiven me—that will please her—that my every dream was of home and her, that——"

"“A boat on the weather-bow," cried a man to Hobson. "Shall we fire?"

"“No," cried Hobson; "never a shot."

"“It had been a picket. We heard her officer shout in Spanish to give way with a will, and she disappeared up into the darkness of the channel we were now entering.

"“The end was coming; the end was very near, and we all knew it."

* * * *

"While the bo's'n had been telling his story, young Hardy sat silent, but he spoke now almost for the first time.

"“A moment, sir. The bo's'n won't tell you, but I must. He tore off his lifebelt, and fastened it around me. He swore I must wear it or he would fling it into the sea. That's all!"

"“Well, sir," continued the bo's'n, "the awful silence was speedily broken. They had seen us only as a dark mass, black as the rocks that towered above us. Then their fire opened. We'll never be

under such a fire again as that, sir, and live. Shells burst above us, around us, shells riddled our hull, and raked our spar-deck, and crushed into our deck-house. Fragments and splinters flew about in all directions. I think most of us were flat on our faces just then, and I lay beside Jackie here holding his hand. No tremor there, though! No signs of fear! And the fire poured into us from three sides, sir, from the batteries of Socappa on the left, from Morro on the right, and from a warship ahead.

“‘Speak of thunder. Pah! thunder isn’t in it with such a devil’s din as this, and lightning ’gainst those gun-gleams would have been like the glint of a farthing candle!

“‘Then we saw brave Hobson’s figure—uneearthly tall it looked. No voice could be heard, only his arms waved us to the bulwarks.

“‘Next second it seemed we were all in the water, as a roar louder than the artillery shook the sky, shook the hills, and silenced even the batteries.

“‘The ship was sinking beside us! We were all but drawn into the whirlpool, but I held Jack’s hand and toughly towed him off.

“‘But the dinghy was gone, and the rudder too, and the *Merrimac* sank, not across, but along the channel. So our forlorn hope had been led in vain. The Spanish fleet was bottled still, but not corked, sir.’

"He paused for a moment.

"Ah, sir, no one there would ever forget that night, nor the hours we passed under a tilted grating that God in His mercy had put it into some one's head to attach by a rope to the ship. We could just get under this catamaran and hold on to the spars above.

"Hour after hour of darkness went by. Boats passed and repassed, and we could hear the men talking. Had they known there were nine heads under that grating, short would have been our shrift, sir.

"And all these hours we hardly spoke. We almost feared to breathe aloud.

"More than once I thought that Jackie here was dead or dying, but I whispered cheering words to him. More than once I trembled as my feet were touched by slimy sharks. How they did not tear me down I cannot tell you. Seems to me, sir, 'twere a 'tarposition o' Providence like.

"But daylight came at last, and Cervera's own boat and Cervera himself.

"Hobson's voice was feeble enough now, but he managed to hail her.

"*"Por Dios!"* we heard the white-haired admiral cry. "Do the dead talk to us?"

"But we were saved, and taken to the Spanish ship. Yes, sir, treated with every kindness, made

prisoners, but released at long, long last, even before sweet Santeehager fell.

“‘Well, that’s my yarn, sir, and it’s all as true as the stars above us.’

“‘And Jack Hardy here,’ I ventured to ask, ‘was he reprimanded?’

“‘Tried by drum-head he was, sir. Condemned to death for desertion, and pardoned all in one sentence.’

“‘Ah, sir,’ the brave bo’s’n added, ‘I’ll bet my boots that Jack Hardy is a midshipman before this cruel war is over. Thank ye, sir, I don’t mind if I do; and I’ll give ye a toast, too—

“ ‘ “ May the Stars and Stripes we love so well,
 With Britain’s flag entwine,
 And we’re goin’ to give the world—fits,
 When the two brave fleets combine.” ’ ”

* * * * *

The *Walrus* sailed on and on around the great Antarctic continent, but never saw her consort till once more the two ships met safe and sound at Kerguelen Isle.

BOOK III

ON THE GREAT ANTARCTIC CONTINENT

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE DISCOVERY—SHEELAH AND TAFFY

"She is bound to be," said Captain Mayne Brace, a day or two before the good ship *Walrus* reached Kerguelen. "Bound to be, Mr. Armstrong. She is the better craft of the two, you know."

He was talking to Ingomar and Walter, one evening in October, while they all sat together in the cosy saloon, not a mile away from the stove.

Ingomar and Brace were smoking the pipe of peace, and sipping their coffee (which they placed, to keep warm, on top of the stove), between each long-drawn sip. Walter was reading one of Scott's novels, or trying to, for he was listening to the conversation all the same. Charlie was missing to-night. I rather think he would have been found, if any one had cared to look for him, forward in the galley, listening to the men's yarns, or playing a hornpipe to please them.

"Well, yes, she is bound to be, in the natural course of events, because, as you say, she has faster sailing qualities, and all that ; but——"

"Ah!" interrupted Mayne Brace, with a smile, and another hearty pull at his coffee; "we must not think of the 'might be,' or the 'may be.' Else we'd go on thinking and get nervous, and end in believing, that because we did not meet the *Sea Elephant* somewhere to the east of Dougherty Islands, she has been taken aback in a squall, and gone down stern foremost, with all hands. Or that she had, at the very least, broken her screw."

"Steward!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Put more coals on the fire."

"Yes, sir."

"And just replenish our cups of coffee. Fresh ground, isn't it?"

"That it be, sir."

"Dumpty always roasts it himself, and I grinds it. A main good hand Dumpty is, sir, at roasting coffee. A little morsel of lard in the bottom of the pan to keep the beans from burning, a good clear fire, and keep them moving and moving; and there you be, sir."

"Steward!"

"Sir to you again, sir."

"Ever anybody ask you for a recipe for roasting coffee?"

"Milk and sugar, sir?"

The milk was another invention of the steward.

It was a fresh gull's egg, beaten and mixed with hot water, and sweetened with pure preserved milk.

On the whole, everybody did his best on board the old *Walrus*.

The men forward to-night were very jolly, for, being so near to the end of their exceedingly long voyage, the captain had spliced the main brace, that is, he had added one modest glass of rum to their nightly allowance. I don't believe in rum myself, but when one is writing a sea story, one must adhere to the truth. The man who does not face realities and the naked truth, is like the fabled ostrich that hid its head in the sand when danger approached.

The men drank "sweethearts and wives," or "wives and sweethearts," in the real good old British fashion. The married men, you know, drank "*wives* and sweethearts." The bachelors, and they were nearly all of that persuasion, put the "sweethearts" to the front.

They had mixed the grog with a good deal of hot water and sugar to make it last. But they toasted each other also; and it was, "Here's to you, Jack;" or, "Here's to you, Bill," or Tom or Joe, as the case might be. And "We've been shipmates now more'n a year, and never a word atween us, bar a sea-boot now and then."

And they toasted "The Captain." "And he is a

good fellow," was the remark of one sailor, "though a stickler for duty."

"Ah! Well, Sconce, dooty is dooty all the world. Stick by that, and we'll all do well."

"Dooty," said another, "is the needle wot points to the Pole, and the Pole is Heaven itself."

"Very good sentiment for *you*, Jack. Here's to dooty!"

"Now, sir"—this to Charlie—"touch her up, sir. Give us 'Homeward Bound,' and we'll all chime in, from Dumpty downwards, to the nipper wot tends the dogs."

"Homeward Bound" was given with glee; but, of course, it was only a make-believe, because there wasn't much home life about Kerguelen.

They sighted the island after passing McDonald and Heard Isles.

Charlie again. He had been determined to be first to see land.

Before the entrance to the creek or natural harbour, where the men and animals were, is a spit of rocky land, a rugged kind of breakwater, and had the *Sea Elephant* been the first inside, her top-masts would have shown over this.

But here was never a ship's mast to be seen.

On the shore, high up on a braeside, was an outlook, and the *Walrus's* people saw both American and British ensigns dipped to welcome the *Walrus*.

The *Walrus* returned the salute.

Then flags of all kinds were set in motion, and the signalmen on board and on shore were very busy indeed, for a time.

"Yes, all was well, now," said the signalman on shore, "but two dogs dead, and one Innuït. *Sea Elephant* had never been seen."

The anchor was hardly let go when the officer's boat was alongside, and he was heartily welcomed down below to exchange experiences.

He and his men had been very busy all the time, and they were ably assisted and supported by the kindly Yak-Yaks. He spoke in the very highest terms of Slap-dash, the chief. In the dreary days of winter, when the island was deep in snow, snowshoe expeditions were got up; but sleighing, especially with the bears, who were better suited to the rough work, was preferred. The Yak-Yak died of inflammation. One dog fell over a cliff and was killed at once. The other was found dead. Both were buried side by side, and cairns mark their resting-place. "There is a cairn also," said Slator, "on the poor Yak-Yak. I think we nearly all dropped some tears at his grave."

I suppose they did, reader, for in the loneliness of such a place as this the heart is sometimes very near the throat. Sunshine brings mirth and happiness, gloom depresses, and there is always a certain amount

of sadness in even the songs of northern nations, such as Iceland, Scotland, and Norway.

Both Charlie and Walt had some doubt as to how the Yak-Yak dogs would receive them again. But, accompanied by Ingomar, they boldly marched some distance into the interior, to the kennels. It was the afternoon of what had been a glorious day, and they had doffed their fur caps and coats.

The bears were not at home just then. Both bears and dogs, indeed, had gone away to roam the wilds nearly every day, but the Bruins, with the dogs, always came shambling or trotting back at eventide, to sleep and to eat.

They were away then at this moment, and Slapdash proposed that, with the Newfoundlands and pet collie, they should all march forth to meet them.

Strangely enough, they had a rendezvous on a hill-top, where most of them met every night, and from this a beaten track to the camp.

To-day several of the dogs were already at the place of meeting, several were straggling up from seawards, and in front (for no dog was permitted to walk behind him) was Gruff, with his well-beloved wife Growley.

When within about seventy yards of the place, where Ingomar and the boys were standing, both stopped short and sniffed the air. Then Growley

gave vent to a half-choked roar of rage, that shook the hills—well, if it didn't shake the hills, it shook the hearts of Charlie and Walt.

"Strangers!" Growley seemed to shout. "I'll tear 'em limb from limb!"

Gruff rounded on her at once, and promptly knocked her down.

Then Gruff came trotting on, and Nora and Nick and the collie ran off to meet them, our heroes following.

That was a *pas de joie*, a joy-dance, if ever there was a joy-dance in this world; and those sceptical creatures, who would class dogs and our other dumb friends as mere automata, would have been converted on the spot to the dear old doctrine, that animals have souls, had they but seen that dance.

It was too absurdly intrinsically droll for description. The other two bears, Grumpey and Meg, came up and joined, and presently all the rest of the bonnie dogs.

They went round and round our heroes in a hairy hurricane; they pretended to worry each other, they barked and roared, and grumbled and growled, till the boys' sides were sore with laughing.

Surely such a scene of merriment was never before witnessed, and when all had quietened down somewhat, they went amicably back to the kennels.

This is not one of Grimms' fairy tales, mind, rather

is it a fairy tale of science and natural history, and these, readers mine, are all true.

* * * * *

A whole week passed away, but still no *Sea Elephant*.

Captain Mayne Brace had taken in more coals, and his arrangements were all complete, so he was becoming impatient ; but at long last the ship hove in sight over the horizon, and the union was complete.

On comparing logs, it was found that they must have passed each other at night, and had been probably within ten nautical miles of each other.

The bigger ship had taken many observations, and done a much quicker voyage. But, knowing that he could be at Kerguelen much sooner than the *Walrus*, a happy thought had occurred to Captain Bell. He would run up to the Cape of Good Hope and endeavour to get a cargo of coals.

Although the war was raging, he succeeded, and now these were landed in case of emergency, each ship just taking enough for the grand new cruise.

I need hardly say that the meeting between Curtis and Ingomar was most cordial.

A grand ball was given on shore on the night of re-union.

Sailors are not sailors unless they can have a bit of fun.

It was a ball of a somewhat heterogeneous description, for men waltzed with men, though Slap-dash did some really graceful movements with Gruff and the other bears as partners. There were no ladies, you see, but all the more freedom and merriment.

Yet, stay ; I must qualify this statement. The Eskimos, Yaks, Innuits, Teelies, or any other name you choose to give them, are droll creatures. They all dress alike in skins, and their faces are all about the same shape.

Now the very day before the *Walrus* and *Sea Elephant* sailed, all being then on board, except a change of men who were to remain at Kerguelen for observation duty, Slap-dash came up and saluted Captain Bell.

"Four of my rascals," he said, "want to speak to you directly."

Then the four "rascals" were led up and threw themselves on their faces before Captain Bell as if they had been worshipping the sun.

"Get up, get up," said Bell, "and speak like men."

They arose at once and stood before him, and two took a step in advance of the other two.

"We not all men-people, sir," said one.

"We not all men-people," said the other.

Captain Bell began to frown.

"Dis ees my ole woman-people," said the first speaker.

"Dis ees my ole mudder-people," said the other.

"Slap-dash," cried Bell, "did you know this?"

"Not befo' dis morning, sah ; no, no."

Captain Bell was puzzled and silent. He addressed Ross, the officer who had been left in charge at Kerguelen.

"No, sir," said this gentleman ; "I don't see how we can send them on shore. We can't want the whole four. They will pine and die if separated. That would be a dead certainty."

"Very dead," said Bell, smiling.

"Besides, though no one suspected their sex, that one called Sheelah is an excellent cook, and both are capital nurses. We were sick sometimes. We had green fever in winter, and certain I am that they nursed us back to life."

The carpenter was next called for.

"Carpenter," said Bell, "a small screen berth will be wanted below in some corner, a kind of l-l-ladies' cabin. Do ye hear?"

"Well, sir, I do hear, because I'm not deaf ; but I don't understand."

"Then just do as you are told, Mr. Inglis."

"Certainly, sir, certainly."

So a little privacy was obtained for Sheelah and Taffy, and, as it turned out afterwards, no one

was the loser for the "women-people" being on board.

Do coming events throw their shadows before?

Perhaps they do. Anyhow, when the two ships looked their last on Kerguelen—the last for a long time, at all events—there was more silence on board than is usual with sailors going off to sea.

They knew the dangers they were going to encounter, but they were all quite acclimatized to the rigorous Antarctic climate by this time, and there was not a man on board, British or American, who was not prepared to do his best. Which of us can do more?

CHAPTER II

A FIGHT BETWEEN MEN AND ICE

The *Sea Elephant's* cruise around the great Antarctic continent, and all her captain and bold men did, and said and saw, would make a book in itself. That may one day see the light, as well as the adventures of the men left behind at Kerguelen.

We must now follow our heroes into a country as widely different in every way as Scotland or England is from the moon.

Now, having been a boy myself, not so very long ago—apparently—and being still a boy at heart, I know that boys do not as a rule care for geography. That is because it is taught in a stupidly, awkward way at schools, a method being adopted which is devoid of all interest. But never mind, I *do* wish you for once in a way to take a look at the map here presented to you. The ships were off south and east from Kerguelen Isle, and the first port to be struck was Termination Land. It was not to be the termination of their cruise, however, by a very long way.

Would you be surprised to learn that there are two poles in the south, and two in the north, the magnetic and real poles.

The real axis, the hub of our "terral" wheel, is the one we have to deal with.

Here all meridians may be supposed to meet at a point.

There would in reality be no more south for a man standing at this pole. Let him look in which ever way he liked, to Africa, to South America, or New Zealand ; it would all be north, north, north. No east, no west, just north.

The *Sea Elephant* and her sister, the *Walrus*, were not to be run into any danger along the coast of Wilkes' Land, which marvellous line of shore may be said to stretch from Termination Land and Island, right away to Ringgold's Knoll, far, far east. It is, or is supposed to be, the longest stretch of coast land in, or any way around, the Antarctic. There is no mistake about this being land, nor that it is indented with bays and gulphs, just as the west coast of Scotland or Norway is ; and these indentations may really divide the continent in places.

I only want to give you some rough idea of this land coast. Had you then been able to sail along it many thousands of years ago—and you would have had to be up very early indeed to do so—before there was any ice here at all, when the shores

were green and forest-clad, the sight you would have witnessed would have been a very beautiful one indeed! Hills and vales and mountain land, and probably in the farther interior, vast sierras, the woods teeming with strange animals; and strange birds would have been there, too, sailing over the forests, or floating on blue seas, alive with myriads of fish of various species, many now lost and gone, others still extant because they have migrated.

But now, though the same formation of surface and contour of hills may remain, they are all, all snow-clad, and protected seawards by a barrier, or barriers of ice, of every description, which few mariners would care to negotiate.

* * * * *

The weather continued favourable, but there were many days of darkness and gloom; and after Termination Land had been reached, it was not considered advisable — strong and well fortified though the ships were—to be among the ice when the shadows of great clouds enveloped the land, or when storms were threatened. But when the sun shone, and the ice was open, then they boldly ventured to push their way through, either under steam, or under sail.

Ice like this closes very suddenly, and if the captain of an exploring ship is not very clever, he

may get caught, and a week's imprisonment counts against a ship when making a voyage.

Sailing in a pack like this, a vessel to a landsman would seem to be in a very dangerous position.

She may be, though no one on board appears to think so. The ice is here, the ice is there, the ice is all around; flat bergs, like what you meet in the north; pancake ice, lakes of slush, and those terrible masses, or square mountains of land-ice—a characteristic feature of this country—with caved perpendicular sides, striated on the horizontal, or, if they have been melted by the sun at one side, oblique, and glittering gorgeously blue, green, or paley white, in the sun's rays.

But all, big or small, covered with snow, so that their very whiteness dazzles the eyes. But at this season there were birds everywhere, and seals of many species. The penguins, I need hardly add, were a very curious sight, as they stood or staggered about on the low flat bergs. Our heroes saw some sea-elephants, though I believe these, as a rule, are far more common to the south of Tierra Del Fuego.

One day, when the ships were pretty close together, and well in through the ice, the sky cleared far too quickly to please Captain Mayne Brace. He knew at once that John Frost would have them in his clutches, if they did not soon beat a retreat.

So he signalled to his consort, and both vessels quickly had their heads turned to the north.

They might have found themselves clear in a few hours had it not suddenly come on to blow from the cold and icy south.

The ice began to pack.

Steam was got up with the greatest despatch, and nearly all sail taken in. Luckily there was no swell, else there would have been pressure enough to have thrown both vessels on their beam-ends on a floe.

The *Sea Elephant* was leading, and by-and-by the *Walrus* managed to creep right into her wake. This was an advantage for a time. A south wind, even with a clear sky, would naturally open the ice, but there was some demon current working underneath that they could not account for; and while they were still two miles from clear and open water, they found themselves rapidly becoming part and parcel of the pack.

Break the ice, did you say? I should smile. You may get steam machinery to smash bay-ice, or splinter pancake, but not your solid, heavy pieces. Oh no! So men who have inventions of this sort should sell them to farmers at home to break up their mill dams in winter.

Then came a battle 'twixt men and ice. Men with their cunning, ice with its force of movement, slow but sure.

Both ships got closer together, the *Sea Elephant* leading, all hands that could be spared from both ships, over the side in front of the foremost.

Armed with great poles, they moved the bergs on every side.

It was bitterly cold work, and the pieces moved but slowly.

Under all the pressure of steam she could produce without risk, aided by the men over the side, the *Sea Elephant* forged her way slowly, fathom by fathom, indeed, but after a time that to our heroes seemed interminable, her jib-boom hung over the black water.*

Then came the scramble to get inboard, and though their fingers were about as hard as boards, and some had frozen faces, in less than ten minutes all hands were once more on their respective decks.

Sail was once more set, fires were banked—save the coals they must—and away they went, right merrily, to the east again, the wind well on the star-board beam.

Although the men had raised a cheer when the ships were quite out of that ugly pack, there was no fear in any breast.

“Would there have been much danger if we had been beset in there, uncle?” Charlie ventured to ask the captain, at supper.

* The sea always looks black among or near the ice.—G. S.

"A fig for the danger, boy. We'll never be out of that, but we came to find the South Pole, or get somewhere near it."

Ingomar smiled.

"Well, then, Hans, we have come to make a big record."

"That will beat all creation, captain."

"Yes, beat all creation, and it would have been misfortune, to say the least of it, to have got beset. That's all. Yes, thanks, steward, I'll have another slice."

* * * * *

The two ships stood steadily onwards now, day after day, sailing whenever they could, steaming only when obliged to, for the economy of coal had to be studied, and that, too, most carefully.

Captain Bell, of the *Sea Elephant*, came now to be recognized as head of the expedition, though on every occasion that was deemed important a council was called and the opinions of all officers taken.

He was now always called The Admiral, but not to his face. He was none too fond of fine titles.

And the *Sea Elephant* was called the Flag Ship, for short.

One day, when in the neighbourhood of the Knoll, the Admiral signalled to the *Walrus*, that as they would soon round Wilkes' Land and stand down

south, it would be best for all hands to bend their cold-weather gear.

In shore English that would signify, give out the supplies of winter clothing.

As it turned out, this was very excellent advice indeed.

The Eskimos had their supply first and foremost, and this they had made themselves, under the supervision of Slap-dash, and from seal-skins with the hair on.

Slap-dash assured Captain Bell that there was nothing so good for keeping out the cold, and his words turned out to be true. Most, however, of the sailors and their officers still stuck to flannel and fur.

Both Charlie and Walter had a very great desire to see the inside of a real ice-cave. These caves look like archways, or the openings into tunnels, and are formed by the dash of the waves on huge bergs of land-ice, or even in the sides of the ice-barrier itself.

They had their desire fulfilled one day, while the ships lay almost motionless on the dark water.

There wasn't a breath of wind, nor was there any fog. And the surveyors were engaged very busily indeed, in taking soundings, and bringing up specimens of the mud or clay at the bottom for examination.

Fires were banked, but the ships were at no great distance from a lofty ice-wall, at the foot of which were several caves.

They rowed on shore at sunset.

And the appearance of that sunset was in itself a sight to behold!

The sun was sinking slowly down to the north of west, and in a cloudless sky. It seemed a larger sun than our young heroes had ever yet beheld, and cast its reflection on the heaving waves 'twixt boat and horizon, in a very remarkable way; for although the sheen was bright, it was not dazzling. Nor was the sun itself. But nearer to the spot where our heroes stood, on the field of level ice betwixt them and the ice-caves, were many shades of opal and pearl.

"We must be moving," said Ingomar, "at last, boys, or we will not get home to-night."

"Oh!" cried Walter, "I wouldn't mind staying here all night to look at the sky."

"Nor I," said Charlie. "I'd like to sleep in the snow. Nothing could harm us except the frost, and we should be in our sleeping-bags, so that couldn't hurt much."

"There are no snakes here, anyhow." This from "wise Walter," as Charlie sometimes called him chaffingly.

"No, Walt; and no burglars, either."

There was one thing to be said for the dogs, Nick and Nora and Wallace. They had long ago fully made up their minds to enjoy themselves to the fullest extent, whenever they had the chance.

They were tearing round and round on the ice-floe at this moment, wriggling and jumping and playing at leap-frog, while Nick would pause every moment to fill his mouth with snow and fling it over his neighbour's shoulders.

The boys must have just one more look at that sky before they entered the ice-cave.

Lo! what a change. The sun was all but down, and sea and sky had changed to orange, deep and charming. The very snow was orange.

But judge of their disappointment when they entered the first cave and found that all was pitch dark.

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTY AND MARVELS OF AN ICE-CAVE

"Oh, what a shame!" cried Walt, impatiently. "We did expect to see something real splendid."

Ingomar laughed.

"You are snow-blind, boys, just for the moment. If you'd come when I told you, when the sun was still above the horizon, you would have had a daylight view.

"The sun can't be expected to stay for you. He has to rise and shine on other seas, if not on other lands."

But when their eyes became more accustomed to the twilight, they could see that they were in a vast vaulted cave, solid ice and snow beneath them, and strange uncanny shapes sparkling in the semi-darkness beyond.

Three men had accompanied Ingomar and the boys, and one was carrying a bag.

"Be cautious how you move, lads, else one of you may go through into the sea, and never be seen again."

"But the ice feels very strong."

"Yes ; it is perhaps a foot thick, and that is strong enough for anything. But there are 'pussy-holes' here and there, up through which seals crawl to sleep, and on these the ice is very thin."

Just as he spoke, there was a sudden and angry roar heard ahead of them, where something black and big reared itself, and two fierce eyes glared at the intruders.

The boys clutched each other in superstitious fear, and stepped quickly back.

It was only a large seal, however, but so quickly did it retreat that Ingomar had not the slightest idea what species it was.

I may say for the seals here in the Antarctic, which number four or five species, that though in the breeding season they have certain habitats, after that happy time is over they are free to wander where they please, and often turn up in strange places. It is the same with Arctic seals.

An eared seal, whose fur has been much sought after, is now, I think, almost extinct, owing to the murderous greed of the sealer. I think it would be well if there were a close season for all species. But this is a digression. Let us return to the cave.

The somewhat mysterious bag carried into the cave was now opened, and Ingomar, bending down,

extracted some of what he termed theatrical properties therefrom.

Next moment, on the touch of a button, the whole of this cave was filled with dazzling light.

What a sight!

"Oh—h—h!"

That was all our boys could say for a moment or two.

No stalactite cave probably ever rivalled the beauty of this.

And here were stalactites, too, in the form of depending icicles, dozens, scores, hundreds of them, and, seen by the electric light, they emitted all the colours of the rainbow.

They walked cautiously on and on a long way into the bowels of this mighty cavern, watching the floor for pussy-holes.

No one could even guess where the seal had gone.

"Well," said Charlie, as they came at last to the end of the ocean-hollowed cave, "I should really have expected to find mermaids here."

"Now," said Ingomar, "one more transformation scene, or perhaps two, and then the pantomime is over."

As he spoke he touched a spring, and, wonderful to say, the cave was illuminated with brightest crimson, then with orange and red again. So on to the pure white light, and in this they found

their way to the mouth of the cave, and made their exit and presently their way to the boats.

"We've seen a sight," said Ingomar, "that is surely worth coming to the Antarctic to look upon."

"Yes," said Charlie, thoughtfully.

"Oh," cried Walt, "will you do it again some time?"

Ingomar laughed.

"It all depends," he said.

A beautiful night now. They must have been a full hour in that cave and didn't mark time.

The moon had arisen, stars were bright and sparkled in the sea.

It was a night for thought more than talking, and no one did talk.

Nothing indeed was heard, save the chunk-chunk, chunkitty-chunk of oars in rowlocks, until the boat grated against the ship's side.

"Wherever have you been, boys?" said Mayne Brace. "I was just going to sound the syren to say supper was ready."

"Ah, Captain Brace, we've had a wonderful time of it, all among the mermaids, though at first we saw a terrible apparition.

"But really, sir, the shriek of your hooter would have dispelled all the romance and mystery. Only I'm hungry now. Aren't you, lads?"

"Rather," said Charlie; and Walter nodded and smiled.

Come to think of it, there is no country in the world like the Antarctic for making people hungry. If we could send off our dyspeptic millions there, they would all come back with appetites which would speedily put up the price of meat.

* * * * *

I think it really was very good of Ingomar to put himself about in pleasing the boys, which he did in every way he could and at every opportunity.

Older people than he would say that he was not much past his own boyhood, being only about three and twenty. But listen, lads, I myself and many others are believers in young blood. Youth has spirit, dash, and go.

At the University, in which I was reared and nurtured, no student considered himself a boy at seventeen. If you had called me a boy in those days, you would have had to strip, and then you would have had to depend a good deal on your muscle and science to get yourself out of the scrape. I'm not going to preach. That isn't my form, but if a lad of seventeen doesn't begin to look ahead and find out that he wasn't put into this world just for the fun of the thing, then, bother me, if I think he'll ever be a real man. So at twenty-three, the ages of both Ingomar and Lieutenant Curtis, the mind should be fairly moulded.

As for Curtis, I never met a sailor of greater

promise, from a really scientific point of view. Naturalist, meteorologist, hydrographist (photographist, too, if there be science in that), and any number of other "ists" thrown in to make up the weight.

Bold and determined was he, too. He liked to get to the bottom of things, just as with his newest dredging machines and sounding gear he liked to get in touch with the bottom of the sea, whether it were but a few fathoms deep, or miles.

Ingomar was a splendid setting off to him. Curtis, with his spare body, his extreme vitality, his noble mind and grasp of soul. Ingomar, with his splendid physique and king-like form. But Ingomar knew the rudiments of most sciences, and he had the rare gift of picking up just the main points of a subject. Hide a few small nuggets of gold in a gravel heap, and Ingomar would soon have found them for you, and wouldn't have bothered much about the gravel. That's the sort of man Ingomar was. With all this there was a deal of romance in his character, and he had one set purpose in this expedition, which, if he could but fulfil, he felt would make his austere father proud of him.

Curtis and he were nearly always together during the thorough exploration—from a scientist's and surveyor's point of view—of that great tract of water far inside the Antarctic circle called Ross's Sea. The

mariners of old did not take much time to study science. It was the surface of the sea they dealt with, and the land around it.

After passing Ringgolds Knoll, *vide* map, you will steer east and south, and after Cape Adare is passed, south into this sea, and its simplest exploration would take months.

It has Victoria Land on the right, a land of wondrous interest, a land of fire in the frozen ocean, land of volcanoes, extinct and extant, of awful icebergs, of more terrible, yet beautiful ice-barriers, and in summer a land of birds in millions.

To explore and survey this sea was one of the chief objects of the voyage.

And now that they had reached Cape Adare, they set about the work in good earnest.

I think you know that Charlie was a boy of many fads—that is the low name for his studies, perhaps—for Charlie's fads were a step or two above keeping rabbits and guinea-pigs. We have seen how when at sea he used to delight to swing away aloft in the crow's-nest, and all the marvels he saw from that eyrie of his would, if described in print, fill a biggish book. There was poetry and romance, too, in his life in the nest, and I'm not sure that his thoughts did not take a nobler turn, and that up there at night swinging among the stars and planets, as one might say, he did not believe himself to be nearer to God—

the God of infinity, mind you, not of this insignificant earth alone.

Anyhow, when he used to come down of a night, after a spell up yonder, his eyes had a happier look, and his face seemed to shine, while his thoughts seemed far away.

He was a harder student than Walter, though had you asked Captain Mayne Brace, he would have told you straight that the latter might possibly make the better sailor, as sailors go nowadays.

"But, bless you, sir," Brace would have added, "your smutty, rattling steamships, all bustle and filth, have almost frightened good old Neptune off his own blue throne."

Well, anyhow, now that work had begun in earnest, Charlie was never tired of studying every new instrument used on board the ship and on shore. That was his new fad. The more he studied geology and meteorology, for instance, the more he wanted to. Had he possessed fifty minds, fifty storehouses for information, Charlie would have set about filling them.

"Look at that," Charlie said, exultantly, to Walter one day.

"Well, what is it? A bit of black greyish stone with some spangles in it."

"That's granite."

"I didn't say it wasn't."

Walter was in a teasing mood that day.

"And this?"

"Some exceedingly black and dirty clay."

"No; but books both, or rather pages from the great Book of Nature.

"All scientists in the present age," added Charlie, "are busy in their own particular branch, and in writing or building chapters of that Book, and when they have finished their works, these chapters will be pieced together, and then we'll have the story of the world."

"Charlie," cried Walt, "come down off there. I hate your giving yourself side. I hate science as much as I hate lawyers' musty old parchments. Climb down off your high horse. The sunlit surface of the sea is good enough for me; the earth's crust is strong enough to walk on, and I don't want to go down in under, nor back to the realms of millions of years ago. Are you aware we are going to have young seal's liver and bacon for luncheon?"

Nick and Nora came bounding up at this moment. Collie wasn't far behind, with his bright eyes and bonnie wise face, and next moment the whole five were united in a daft and delightful game of romps.

And the liver and bacon were excellent.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAMP—SLEDGING ON THE TABLELAND

Yes, everybody was busy. From the captains themselves down to Jack and Gill, the Shetland ponies, and the little mongrel seal that the boys had made a pet of.

The Eskimo dogs had got their summer clothes on; the Eskimos themselves, especially Slap-dash, were very lively. The bears wanted to go on prowl at once. Gruff, Grumpey, Growley, and Meg were excited by the shimmer of the snow. It reminded them of their dear native land.

Sheelah and Taffy were exceedingly gay and droll. But they were useful. When they had some lessons in cooking, Sheelah excelled the cook, and Dr. Wright turned Taffy into a really good and practical nurse.

The ships were just as one at present. But a camp was being formed on shore in a ravine betwixt two hills to the north of Mount Murchison, so the forces would soon be divided.

A whole month was to be spent in this camp

making preparations for the grand dash into the interior.

This was imperative; both Curtis and Dr. Wright insisted on it.

These officers had to consider what men and animals were to be included in the land expeditionary force. Oh, it wasn't to be all fun, I do assure you.

There was an excellent landing here, for they had found a fiord, a deep arm of the sea, that the scientists believed would be more open as summer advanced, and form an excellent harbour where the *Walrus* could lie in open water as the base of the undertaking, and if ice-bound in autumn, it would be but pancake—so they thought—through which they could saw their way to clear water.

As for the *Sea Elephant*, she would remain at sea and continue to explore.

Ingomar was not certain in his own mind whether he had not been guilty of an act of cruelty in bringing the Shetland ponies into Polar waters. They had been on shore many times, it is true, and had never been a day ailing; but, on the whole, they had not had very much exercise.

Well, the camp here was commenced. It was to be only a trial one, for those whom Ingomar and his brave companions should leave behind there when they made their dash, would live on board ship.

Everything to be taken into the interior was to be light, but strong ; and during their many months of camping out here, they would doubtless gain experience of what would be wanted.

There were sledges of "burden and baggage," that were to be drawn by the bears, under the care of Slap-dash ; the Shetland ponies, with a good man, would greatly assist the heavy work. The dog-sledges would be driven by some of Slap-dash's men. These sleighs would carry light baggage and camp-gear. They were called the "dash-aways."

The whole was put under the charge of Dr. Wright. He was a hardy, bold fellow, and determined to make all the rest like him.

"I'll make you all athletes before you start," he said ; "every man Jack of you. And you won't need any dumb-bells or chest-developers either."

"They shall all do as you tell them," said Lieutenant Curtis. "They shall, indeed, doctor."

"By Gordon !" cried Wright, flinging his brawny right arm straight out from the shoulder, as only a good pugilist can. "And don't you say 'they' again, old man, Curtis. Say '*we* will do all that you tell us, doctor.' 'Cause I'm your medical manager. Just you look after your meteorological apparatus—your lenses, your magnetic machinery, your anemometers, your thingummyometers, and all the rest

of your paraphernalia, and leave all other matters to me—Dr. Wright of Edinboro toon.”

“Bravo, my friend!” cried Ingomar, coming up at the time. “Just you keep Curtis under and well in hand, Wright. Curtis would kick over the traces if Curtis could, you bet.”

So Dr. Wright proclaimed martial law; and soon the portable bungalow and the tents were up and ready.

There is a lot to be done in camps even by the seashore in old England, and in regularity alone, combined with method, lies their comfort.

Taffy was the good doctor’s loblolly boy. In her care were the medicine wallet and surgical instruments. But the doctor had also taught her the bugle-calls, for Wright himself was a musician and a volunteer officer at home. She was also cook’s assistant, Sheelah being cook supreme.

Taffy and Sheelah slept together in one bag. These were excellent bags, too. Wright and Slapdash had spent a good deal of time over their making. You popped in or wriggled in, and when your head was easy, simply drew the lid over your head. No fear of smothering in your own carbonic acid in ordinary weather. Taffy sounded the first bugle at 6 a.m., or, in easier language, four bells; and if some one wasn’t astir five minutes after, that “some one” heard of it. You had just five minutes,

or, say six, to rub your eyes and say your prayers, then you began to kick yourself clear of the bag and commence ablutions forthwith.

The doctor insisted upon these being conducted *secundum artem* and in a perfect way.

There was no hot water, and there was no cold, but there were snow and an easily dissolvable soap, and towels galore. Your very face would shine after this, and your spirits rise.

Then exercise for half an hour. Walking, running, leaping, or dancing, or boxing, or fencing.

The doctor had an eagle eye, and no one must shirk this.

The breakfast bugle went at seven, "Too—too—tootitty—tootitty—too." Taffy had splendid lungs.

Every one was hungry, and the food was satisfying, if not over-refined.

After a rest, the day's work was begun. At first the packing and surveying of the sledge contents and baggage generally were almost exercise enough till dinner-time. They were kept hard at this every forenoon till every one knew the duty perfectly, and could have told where everything was packed and how to get at it without the slightest confusion.

This was the drill for three or four days, and once a week after this.

The dogs and bears were very tractable, and evinced no inclination at present to go far from camp. But

Gruff and his ursine companions soon came to think penguin food the best they ever tasted. They stalked the birds and they stalked seals just as they did in their own Northern home.

The boys and Ingomar did pretty much as they pleased all the afternoon, and Curtis was busy almost from morn till night with his studies.

The ponies did not at all object to go on a "cruise" with Charlie, Walt, and the pet Newfoundlands and Collie, away up through the rough ice in the glen or valley, up and up to a smooth, white, all-too-breezy tableland which stretched in a westerly and southerly direction as far as they could see.

Oh, the delightfulness of their first bareback ride across this snowy plain! Blue, blue the sky, and speckled with fleecellets and feathers; bright the sun at one moment, clouded the next; to the left, Ben-Murchison; far, far to the left, Ben-Sabine, sullenly smoking, his black, bare head silhouetted against the sky. Keen the air. Had to ride with gloves and masks. Cared nothing for that. Knapsacks crammed with biscuits for dogs and ponies, and pork sandwiches for themselves. I don't think boys were ever more happy, and I'm sure they didn't draw rein till they had cantered and galloped nine good miles.

"Make a note of this, Walt, old man. We've forgotten to bring our compasses."

So they had.

It didn't seem to trouble them much, however. They threw themselves down on their backs to enjoy a sun-bath before luncheon. The dogs, too, lay down to chew snow, and the ponies began to graze upon it, if that isn't an Irish bull.

The ponies had already been taught to come to whistle, and to do many pretty tricks. A Shetland pony can be largely evolved. I have had them beg like dogs. These did; and they also took bits of biscuits from the boys' lips, and took their fur caps off. This last was a coaxy kind of trick. The ponies improved upon it to-day, though, by running off with them to present to Nick and Nora.

Nick and Nora, caps in mouth, with Wallace at their side, went racing round and round like circus horses, Charlie and Walt, bareheaded, in the centre. Cold work standing thus, but the lads' faces were all aglow now, and they cared not.

Then that simple luncheon. Dry biscuits and pony "bix" galore, cold coffee, and more snow. The coffee was frozen in scales, so they had to put the flasks into their bosoms before they could shake it out, a few brown scales at a time, to eat off their palms.

A white spot on Walter's face!

"Rub it out," said Charlie, and put his finger on it, for Walt felt nothing.

Rubbed out with snow.

Remount, and a slower ride back to camp in time for tea.

And weren't they hungry, too! This was only the first of many such scampers.

That great snowy tableland came now to be the regular exercising ground for all the animals.

A squad of men were first requisitioned from the ships to do some work in the glen.

Not navy work, but nazvy work. They were set to form a better road up to the tableland by levering the big blocks out of the way, and sledge-hammering the smaller. It was by no means a difficult task, and was completed in a day and a half, with the exception of one great fellow of a berg, which they didn't know how to tackle; but MacDonald, captain of explosives, came to the rescue, and in less than an hour he had literally blown it to smithereens.

The roar of that explosion reverberated from the hills here and there for many seconds after.

The seals on the ice raised themselves to listen, and the penguins looked up in the air as ducks do in a thunderstorm.

The road was complete.

Ingomar and Slap-dash wondered if the bears had forgotten their cunning.

They came to whistle as the dogs did. The dogs

were told go about their business and not hustle. Their time would come next.

Gruff and his wife seemed puzzled at first. But soon they remembered things, and when they were put to the very heaviest sledge of all and harnessed, Gruff yawned and gaped, and finally knocked Slap-dash down. But it was done merely as a matter of form; a blow, in Pickwickian sense, meant for a caress. Slap-dash only laughed, and put a handful of snow on Gruff's nose.

Then he mounted. No whip, only his voice. The bears went away as easily with their load as you or I could with an empty barrow.

The boys rode behind, then came Ingomar and Curtis in furs, with poles in their hands, with their snow-shoes over their shoulders; and half a dozen Yak-Yaks brought up the rear.

Snow-shoes were put on by the infantry when the tableland was gained. After this it was all plain sailing.

When tired of talking, Ingomar and Curtis started a song—a song to suit the pace, but one with melody in it, and the boys joined in the chorus.

This was only breaking the ice (figuratively), for before the two hours' drag was over, many such were sung.

Luncheon, as before, on the snow.

Bears had frozen seal and biscuits, the Yak-Yaks

had the same, the white men a nice luncheon, and all had coffee or snow, as they chose.

The boys had snow to-day.

"Don't spare it, lads," cried Ingomar ; "there's plenty more in the larder."

After the post-prandial pipes, Curtis got up and drew out his note-book. Everything was unpacked, seen to, and once more placed in order.

It was a most pleasant outing ; all hands confessed that this was true enjoyment, and not roughing it. Gypsying, picnicking—call it what you please, but just add the words, "jolly good fun."

The dogs had their trial next day, a whole pack of them ; and the trial, twenty miles, was done in half the time, only they did not have the same great load.

Funnily enough, Wallace the collie took entire charge of this pack, for as soon as the Yak dogs were in-sledged, he took up his position to the right, and barked encouragingly all the way.

He was first on the tableland, barking down at them, and on the snow, when they seemed to flag a little, he swept round and round. Humpty Dumpty was driving, but he needed no whip, for Collie at once singled out the dog that was in fault, and gave him a sharp nip.

Grumpey and Meg submitted with a less easy grace, and required a good deal of reminding. When

touched smartly on the nose with the whip, they shook their heads, and I'm afraid they made use of some terrible swear-words ; but as they did so in the Russian or Ursine language, nobody was supposed to know what they said.

When they were well off and away on the table-land, Grumpey appeared to say to his wife—

“Meg,” said he, “I think we might cut some capers now.”

“If you say we might,” replied his wife, “then, of course, we might.”

“Stand on your hind legs, then.”

Grumpey threw himself on his haunches, and Meg followed suit.

Swish round their noses came the whip, and down they went again on all fours, talking much worse Russian.

“Mr. Slap-dash,” Collie appeared to say, “this is a somewhat peculiar case. Leniency is thrown away on Grumpey. I'll ride him as postillion.”

He suited action to these identical words, at all events, and leapt nimbly on great Grumpey's back.

Grumpey did not feel Collie's weight, of course, but he heard him barking, and he felt his sharp teeth in his off ear whenever he attempted to misconduct himself.

Collie really made a splendid postillion.

* * * * *

The boys themselves broke the ponies in to harness. A task of no small difficulty, for they had never been used to this. Of all horses in the world for cussedness, as the Yankees call it, a Shetland pony is the worst, if not broken in early.

They are so lovable and beautiful, too, and Jack and Gill had developed coats on them like a Skye-terrier. They could hardly see out of their natural face-protectors, but so bonnie and wicked was the morsel of eye one could see, that, instead of talking cross to them, the lads would often laugh and kiss their noses.

Finally the ponies succumbed to kisses, caresses, and bits of biscuit and sugar.

For love can conquer even a Shetland pony.

CHAPTER V

THE START—FIRST NIGHT IN THE DESERT OF SNOW

The month's training that Dr. Wright gave his merry men was no sham one.

It was often carried out under considerable difficulties, too. For even in summer the weather is most unsettled. One year of open ice does not always follow another. There is the same uncertainty as regards the weather from day to day or week to week.

There were days when, owing to fogs or mists, though it was getting on now for mid-summer, hardly anything could be seen. One could hear the cries and screaming, or grunting, of the birds afar off, the splash of seals taking the water, or the whale in search of food, blowing off steam, but be unable to distinguish one tent from the other, while the Eskimo dogs loomed through the semi-darkness like bears, and the Shetland ponies took on the form of elephants, bar the trunks, and even Humpty

Dumpty, for the time being, might have been mistaken for a giant in furs.

No matter, men and beasts must be hardened, and things went on as before.

When sledges did get lost in the fog high up, and across the plain, they had to feel their way as best they could, with the help of the pocket-compass.

The sledge parties were kept two days instead of one on the interior ice, and slept, of course, in their bags. No matter how high the wind or wild the weather, into those bags they must go. They were usually two-men bags, and these are the most comfortable.

Charlie and Walt could have knocked down a Patagonian before that month was over.

Here is an incident worth relating. One bitterly cold night, shortly after a couple of two-men bags were put down—Ingomar, by the way, had a bag for himself, and Curtis always found room for Collie in his—the boys stood talking to Dr. Wright for a few minutes. When he and Walt went to retire, lo, here was Nick in one bag, and Nora in another.

"Pray don't turn me out," pleaded Nick.

"Nor me," whimpered Nora.

So Charlie blew up his air-pillow, and crept in beside Nick, and Walt shared his bag with Nora. When Dr. Wright came out to look for his, he was one to the bad, and had to bend a fresh one.

But the dogs never stirred nor talked in their sleep, and so the boys heard nothing till Taffy's bugle rang merrily out on the morning breeze.

The dogs ever after this persisted in being bagged. They looked upon it as their right.

When Dr. Wright was appealed to, he said, as the dogs were clean and comfortable, there could be no harm. He left it to themselves—to the boys he meant, not the dogs.

But during the dash into the interior, and all that followed, having the dogs bagged was found to be a good plan, because a Newfoundland or Collie dog gets massed with ice and snow, and, if lying out, he might perish. Anyhow, he would be frozen to the ground, and it would be found impossible to prise him up without great pain, danger, and loss of coat.

For bad weather these three pet dogs had well-made waterproofs, which covered even the heads, leaving room for the ears to come out.

Strange to say, a dog's nose never gets frozen, and the hair between the well-soled pads prevents frost-bite.

In the snow this hair gets "balled" with hard snow, and cripples the poor fellow, so he comes wisely to his master to have the balls broken off, and is very grateful.

During the journey, Slap-dash came ingeniously to the dogs' relief, and made them leggings.

A Newfoundland in seal-skin breeches would seem a curious sight to some. Well, laugh if you like, reader, but there they were.

Several men failed to pass the doctor's examination after the month, and yet they were men fit for any condition of climate, perhaps, save that with which our heroes were now quite prepared to do battle.

A month is certainly not a long time in which to train in athletics, but it must be remembered that those whom Dr. Wright had chosen had been fit and well at the time they commenced to train.

So strong and willing were their hearts, that it was no unusual thing for some of them to lie down naked of a morning at the ablution hour before breakfast, and roll in the snow, or be covered over for half a minute by their comrades. This is really not such a terrible ordeal as you lads who hug the fire and live in stuffy rooms might imagine. The snow is often warmer than the air around it.

There was a dinner on board the *Sea Elephant* on the night before Curtis and his crew of sledgelings, as he called them, departed on their long and marvellous inland tour. But there was no boisterous merriment thereat, and no wine was permitted, no splicing of the main-brace.

Every one of the sledgelings wrote a letter, or letters, to the old country. These were to be taken by the *Sea Elephant* to New Zealand, and posted there.

It is needless to say that Curtis wrote to Marie, and so did Ingomar. Ingomar wrote also a most filial letter to his father and mother. No bombast about it, and no boasting about what they were going to do. They were simply going into the interior in the direction of the South Pole. They could not reach that, he said, but they wanted to winter just as near it as possible, and, if possible, break the world's record, as every American and British subject had the right at least to try to do.

That was about all.

Ingomar's heart was a brave one. There was sentiment, romance, and love too, in it, but no such thing as hysteria. Yet was there moisture in his eyes as he closed and sealed his letters and placed them in the bag.

Next morning farewells were said almost in silence, and these heroes of the wild Antarctic prepared to mount. Perhaps Dr. Wright was trying to encourage a little merriment, or a laugh at least, when he said—

"You haven't forgotten the salt, have you, Curtis?"

"No, Wright," returned Curtis. "Are you sure you have stowed away your gum-lancet?"

A minute after this, the land expedition had started. Cheer after cheer rent the morning sky, the guns of the *Walrus* and *Sea Elephant* fired one last salute, then all was still and silent.

Commander Curtis, as we may now call him, wanted to do as much as possible every fine day.

And this was one. For on that vast upland of snow they managed to put five and twenty statute miles between them and the ships, before the final halt was called for dinner, rest, and sleep.

This was almost a record day.

A day free from hitch or even adventure of any kind.

The sun never set now, but, just as it does in Greenland North or in Baffin's Bay, went round and round, higher up at midday, a bright and burning silver shield, lower at midnight, and a trifle more dim or yellow.

Storms are frequent, even in summer, in this region; but there are a very large number of sunny days.

The scenery has a character entirely its own, and a charm which no one can adequately describe in words. You must have the scene before you in reality before you can realize the charm.

The order to-night was early to bed—or, rather, early to bags, for the first part of next day was to be spent in ascending a hill at the foot of which they were now pitched.

Curtis's intention was not only to take the usual observations, but, as far as possible, his bearings for the journey of the day.

In such a country as this they could hardly expect to travel as crows fly. The easiest road would be the shortest.

They were in bags by nine, and asleep almost immediately. With the exception of the slight noise bears make in their sleep, there was nothing here to disturb them, and they were far enough away from the hill-foot to fear a falling avalanche. The stillness of such a region as this is appalling. On a windless night you almost fear to speak aloud.

At four o'clock next morning, Taffy awoke Curtis quietly, and he was soon ready. Sheelah, too, was up, and warming coffee essence, which, with fresh eggs beaten up, and condensed milk, and biscuit, made a good breakfast for so early an hour.

Ingomar shared, and Collie also.

These were the only three who were to ascend the hill, which, though only about 1500 feet high, would permit them to have a view, not only seawards, but on every side, to a great distance.

The difficulty of ascent was by no means great, yet both men, though armed with their poles, were considerably pumped before they stood on the peak, or rather lay down on it, and gazed around them.

The air was colder here, and there was a breeze of wind, cold enough for anything. Curtis's observations were quickly taken, and his bearings too, and

it was soon noticed that there was at least one other pleasant day's work before them.

It was a mountainous land, and, far to east, to west, and to south even, "hills on hills successive piled." They noticed, too, that many of these were evidently volcanic.

"You see, Ingomar," said Curtis, almost solemnly, "the great war 'twixt fire and snow is still raging."

"Which shall win?"

"Ah, my friend, we are young, but we know which will win. It is a sad thought that, in time to come, the snow of the south and the north, and the ice will extend and extend until they meet, blotting out all life in their marvellous circular tract, until the most minute forms thereof do vanish and perish."

"And then?"

"Seas dry, globe cooled to its centre, the snow, the moisture, and ice itself extinct, the fires of even the interior gone for ever. Cracked and crevassed, we shall roll, a dead planet, round the sun, a moon to it, perhaps, until this world burst into pieces and fall upon other planets in cosmic dust."

Ingomar was silent, and looked somewhat sad. He knew his friend was clever, and a student of nature in its widest sense, but he hardly expected to find in him a philosophic pessimist.

"And then?" said Ingomar, almost sadly. "And then, my friend?"



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"LOOK AROUND YOU", HE SAID, WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARM

Curtis's face sparkled with happiness and enthusiasm almost instantly.

"And then, Ingomar? Away with thoughts of gloom, millions and billions of years of sleep are but as our puny seven hours, and the same God, the Good, the Eternal, Who awoke us at first, can and will awake us again to the brightness of another day.

"Look around you," he said, with outstretched arm. "Look at the beauty before and beneath us." There were tears in the young fellow's eyes.

Ingomar had never seen him so strangely emotional before.

"Brother Ingomar," he said, "I'm going to hope and to trust."

"And so am I, brother Curtis."

Then, hand in hand, on that brilliant peak they stood together in silence.

CHAPTER VI

“GOOD-BYE, BOYS. IT WON’T BE FOR LONG”

And what a scene it was too.

Down below to the left was the still slumbering camp; the middle distance was the eternal snow guarded by its hills, then came the sea-beach, shingly now. They could even see their ships, next the dark blue sea dotted or flecked with the white bergs big and small.

But on that sea-beach, when they drew it a little nearer by means of their telescopes, what a scene of life and love and happiness!

The denizens of air and sea were all awake and busy. They could see seals diving and swimming or basking in the sun, flocks of bright-winged gulls, and penguins bustling about in every direction.

There was nothing but joy yonder. No attempt to solve the infinite, or pluck from Heaven its greatest secrets.

Yonder was contentment unalloyed.

And there was sunshine over all; it glimmered in the sea in radiance sublime, it spangled the snow

and seemed to turn it into diamonds, it filled earth and air, and best of all it filled the hearts of the lonely beholders, till they were fain to smile at their recent gloom.

"A glorious scene, Curtis!"

"A glorious scene, Ingomar! That is our last look at the sea for a time, but not for ever. Oh, no, not for ever!"

Then down they came from the mount, with faces a-shine in the gladsome air.

* * * * *

That day's journey was scarcely so long. The sun was resplendent, and at the evening meal every one was happy and cheerful. Nay, but hopeful in the extreme.

"I drink your healths in coffee, gentlemen, and may the united British and American flags float in the future over every land and sea in all the world. We're bound for the end of the world, the place where people jump off, you know, and I am not so very sure we shan't eventually reach it. But we mean to return without jumping off."

And every one only spoke the feelings that were within him.

Coffee generally makes people wakeful. It does not if taken in the Arctic or Antarctic. It makes one contented and happy, and even if drunk last thing at night in this pure life-giving air, you get sleepy

as soon as you have wriggled into your bag, and doze off almost, though not quite, before you have said your prayers. Still you have no fear. Somehow there seems to be a protecting Power around you.

“Oh, watch ye well by daylight,
For angels watch at night.”

* * * * *

Before ten days of travel had been accomplished the country had grown very wild indeed, the mountains high and rugged, some volcanic, while many of the valleys they felt they must negotiate were in places half choked with ice-boulders.

They seemed indeed to be glaciers that had been shaken and shattered by earthquake or volcanic force. But this was merely conjecture. At all events it made the progress extremely slow and hard.

The sledges had often to be unpacked and the parcels carried on the ponies' backs and on those of the good Yak-Yaks quite over the obstructions. The animals of course had little difficulty in getting over the obstacles, but often it fell to the lot of the men to lift and carry the empty sledges.

In clear weather, and it was mostly clear, the plan of getting high up on to some hill was constantly adopted, in order to find out the most likely route.

This was not an agreeable duty, wild and weird

although the scenery was. But it was one that usually fell to the lot of Slap-dash himself and one of his men.

Those Eskimos never tired.

Everything considered, they had kept their straight course with very few détours indeed, and, in ten days' time, had made the very excellent record of a hundred and seventy miles.

Then came a wild blizzard from the south, with sheets of driving snow.

They found shelter behind a friendly precipice, creeping as closely together—men and beasts—as possible, for warmth and protection. The storm, which at times blew with hurricane force, delayed the advance for four and twenty hours.

Most of the time was spent in bag.

Honest MacDonald — Captain X—— —pooh-poohed the blast. He would not turn into his bag.

“It’s a bit kittle storm,” he admitted ; “but, losh ! lads, I’ve seen mony a waur in the Hielan’ hills, when tending my father’s bits of sheepies.”

MacDonald had Bobbie Burns’s poems to comfort him, and he drank coffee and spun yarns the whole day long. He was a rare hand at telling a story—especially a fish story—but they couldn’t have been *all* true. He generally ended every yarn with the words, “But that’s nothing. I’ll gi’e ye anither.”

And each fresh story had a broader base than the previous. Not that they were based on the solid truth.

That day he put a climax to his yarns by telling his listeners seriously that, one morning in the Arctic regions, while on shore in Yak Land, he found a stranded whale. He was looking at it when, "without a moment's warning, the sky became overcast, and a blizzard, boys, ten times wilder than this, came on to blow.

"A blizzard," he said, "that would have killed a regiment of Gordon Highlanders!"

"And how did you escape?"

"Crept into the whale's mouth, of course, and quickly too. But the beggar wasna dead ava. The jaws closed, and I was a prisoner.

"I didn't know what to dae, gentlemen; and I was getting short o' breath, and expectin' every minute the brute would wriggle off, as he was sure to do at high water.

"I was in despair, boys, I can tell ye."

"I should think so," said Charlie.

"Suddenly," said MacDonald, without moving a muscle, "I mindit me that I had a packet o' a terribly strong explosive in my pouch.

"To think was to act.

"I quickly stuck the long fuze, and raxed* my

* Raxed = stretched.

hand wi' the parcel as far as I could down the awful beast's gullet.

"Nane ower soon, I can assure you.

"The beast was tickled a bit when I lichtit the fuse, and made at once for the water.

"Whizz—bang! and the whole top of his head was blown off, and I walked on shore!"

"And you weren't hurt, Mac?"

"Weel, no, mon, but I must alloo I was a wee bit shaken."

* * * * *

Slap-dash was early to the hill next morning. The weather was as bright and fine as if blizzard had never been blowing.

When he came down his somewhat dirty face was sparkling with joy.

"As far as I can see, sah, top ob dis valley, she is one big big, long long, sea ob snow."

This was indeed glorious news.

And this tableland, when they got up to it, was found to stretch on for probably twenty miles or more, and Slap-dash was not likely to make a mistake in a matter of this kind.

Merrily they marched on this morning; Ingomar and the rest of the white men—Eskimos are not black, however, when washed—beguiling the way with cheerful conversation and with many a song, in

the choruses of which even Dumpty and the Yaks joined.

This was a little Republic, a Republic on the march ; and although every respect was paid by the men to their officers and superiors, there was far more real communion than on ordinary occasions ; so, on the road, or squatting around in a circle of an evening, the simple sailors were invited to sing and yarn, and they cheerfully responded.

MacDonald was not only the best yarn-spinner but the best singer in the pack. Scottish songs, of course ; and what nation has sweeter or more heroic melodies than green Caledonia ? But it was strange to hear the rough doric voice raised here in this wild land of snow and ice, whether in love lilt, such as "Annie Laurie," or in those more than martial songs, which so often led the sons of the heather to death or victory in far-off foreign lands.

MacDonald's was a voice that seemed to stir the heart-blood of even Gruff. Hear him to-day, for instance, while the great caravan of daring explorers was making its swift but almost silent passage over the tableland, and close to the hills—

"There is many a man of the Cameron clan
That has followed his chief to the field,
And sworn to protect him or die by his side,
For a Cameron never can yield."

And big, burly MacDonald swung his arm out

towards the everlasting hills as he sang the next verse—

“I hear the pibroch sounding, sounding,
Deep o’er yon mountains and glens,
While quick springing footsteps are trampling the heath,
’Tis the march of the Cameron men.”

This was a record day, in every sense of the word—a record in its sunshine, its warmth, its joyfulness, and its mileage covered. Fancy, thirty miles with all those burdens!

* * * * *

Another fortnight and over has passed and gone, and the scene is changed somewhat. A fortnight of almost forced marches, of toils and struggles with nature, most bravely and pluckily borne by all hands. Indeed, there had been an utter absence of selfishness. Every one in sunshine, storm, or tempest, seemed to think of others all the time, and not of himself.

But it had been hard work; oh, ever so hard and toilsome.

And now a camp must be formed, and a hut built—a huge, square igloo, built of blocks of snow or ice in a corner of a glen they had found well sheltered from the chilly southern blasts, on somewhat raised ground, too, so that even a snow blizzard would be little likely to bury them alive. But the construction of the igloo, and the storage of the food for men and

beasts, was now to be left to the charge of our heroes, Charlie, Walter, Wright, and MacDonald ; for Ingomar, with Curtis and Slap-dash, were to push on now in the lightest and fastest dog-sledges as near to the actual South Pole as it was prudent to get.

The summer is all too brief at the best, and there was not a single day to lose.

They had a good man in Dr. Wright. His Arctic experiences had taught him many a lesson, and he was little likely to make a mistake in anything that concerned the health or feeding of the men and animals under him.

A word about the food supplies. The feeding of the bears and ponies had, before starting, been Wright's greatest concern, and many an experiment he had made.

All food was to be in the condensed and preserved form, and the biscuits, which had been prepared especially before leaving Britain, contained the best essence of beef. These for dogs, bears, and men. Those for the ponies were simple.

Being so far from their base, the ships near the sea of Ross, they could expect no succour or assistance of any kind ; but with the immense dragging power at his command, Dr. Wright had carefully computed that a six months' supply could be taken at least. In addition to this, they had frozen seal beef for the bears, when doing the heaviest work, and on this,

with a biscuit or two a day, they had been hitherto fed. We very naturally believe that bears, being so very large, require a large amount to eat. This is a great mistake. There is no animal I know of who, in proportion to his size, eats less, unless it be the Eskimo dog. Both dogs and bears, in winter, can subsist on hardly anything, provided they have a large amount of sleep.

And now that they had safely reached this far south, and the really heavy work was over, Dr. Wright had a comparatively easy mind. Yet he himself would always superintend the serving-out of the stores, and the feeding of his camp, in the most economical way, and on a scientific basis.

It is this very food difficulty, I believe, and this alone, which prevents the brave hearts of Britain and America from hoisting their flags at the North Pole.

That *is* going to be reached, and don't forget what I say, reader. And I think—I will not say I fear—that the Stars and Stripes will float there in the Northless Land before the British.

I call the Arctic Pole the Northless Land, boys, because there the meridians or parallels of longitude all meet at point, and parallels of latitude all begin. There is no longer any east, west, nor north, to the man at the Pole, whose name, I am told, is Cameron. I suppose Cameron's house is like John o' Groat's—

a round one. Figuratively speaking, everything is beneath him, and from whichever window he looks he is looking due south. If Cameron has a bit of a garden encircling his house, which, being a Scotsman, he is bound to have, to grow a few potatoes and a bit of kail in, then every time he walks round this garden he walks round the earth, and it would be the same at the South Pole, only *vice versa*, as a glance at the map will show you. All meridians point due north, as I said before.

It was in the first week of January that Ingomar and Curtis started to make their last record.

Its success would depend in a great measure on how provisions held out. But they had good hopes, good spirits and health; and the dogs, even honest Wallace, had never been in better form, nor fitter.

The instruments which Curtis loaded up were few enough, however, to make observations. But the most important one was the camera, for by turning this twice or thrice daily back upon the scenery they had passed through, they would be enabled to have a pictorial guide back again. The light is not very good in these regions, but it would serve anyhow to give them the outlines, and these would be enough.

"Good-bye, boys. Good-bye. It won't be for long."

That was all.

They went away seemingly with light hearts. Yet Charlie and Walter gazed sadly after them, as long as they could be seen.

Then slowly, and in silence, with Nick and Nora by their sides, they returned to camp.

CHAPTER VII

MARVELS OF THE ANTARCTIC

We find our Expedition to South Polar regions now cut up into four divisions, though I know, as if by instinct, that the hearts of my readers are in the highlands of the far interior with my chief heroes.

We are at liberty to have a look, however, at the doings of the ships themselves, just for a minute or two, before wrapping our furs still closer around us, and returning to Ingomar and Curtis, or our people in camp.

It must not be thought, therefore, that the officers of the *Walrus* and *Sea Elephant* were otherwise than busy.

While the weather was still open, therefore, and the sea and shores free, in a measure, from ice, Captain Mayne Brace came out of his creek, or harbour, and commenced a scientific voyage once more along the shores of Victoria Land; while Captain Bell, with Milton, the old mate of the *Walrus*, was first to explore Ross's sea to the south and east, and afterwards make the best of his way

to New Zealand, taking with him the few invalids there were, and the letters. He was to return with extra provisions, extra stores, and more coals.

Of coals there could not be too much. Coals mean heat and power, and therefore life itself.

His reappearance in Bell's Sound, as the well-sheltered little creek, which the *Walrus* had chosen as her Antarctic home, had been named, would be awaited with a very great deal of anxiety indeed.

THE MARVELS OF THE ANTARCTIC.

Boys of an inquiring turn of mind will read the following brief notes with interest, I feel certain. And I rejoice to say that, among my hundreds of thousands of young British readers, there is a very large number who prefer the solid and lasting to the romantic and ephemeral. We all love heroes, and delight in their deeds of derring-do, but we all want to know a little about the world we live in.

I must refer you to books for the history and adventures of the chief heroes of the Antarctic. Sir James Clark Ross, who sailed about in these regions as far back as 1840 and forward, was certainly a hero in every sense of the word, and considering that he had neither proper instruments for scientific observation, nor steam-power, his brave deeds and discoveries are truly marvellous. The great Ross sea to the

East of Victoria Land is named after him, is a monument indeed, which while the world lasts can never be destroyed, to British pluck and endurance. His was, however, a voyage of research with the view of finding out the Magnetic Pole, which, no schoolboy need be reminded, is different from the true axis of the earth—the centre line from south to north round which the world revolves, as does a wheel upon its axle.

Do I make this sufficiently clear to you? The axis or axle poles are the rotation poles, but the magnetic poles do not, as I said, coincide. This world itself, therefore, is just a gigantic spherical magnet. At these poles the dipping-needle stands vertical. The discovery of these poles, of course, enables us to correct our navigation charts, but as the magnetic forces are not constant, the more closely they are studied the better.

Enough of that, which is a long and, I fear, a dry subject.

Mount Erebus and Mount Terror lie at the southernmost and westernmost end of Ross's great sea. They are still active volcanoes, standing over twelve and ten thousand feet respectively above the sea's level.

Along the base of Ross's sea runs a gigantic barrier of ice, hundreds of feet high, which seems to tell the pigmy man that thus far may he come, but

no further. Within the next hundred years, however, that pigmy means to wrench most of its secrets from Nature.

We all owe much to the cruise of the gallant *Belgica*, in 1898—1900; she reached a southern latitude of about 78° or over.

It is far more easy to reach to high latitudes in the north owing to the comparative mildness of the climate.

The southern summer is shorter and colder than that at the North Pole.

Well, we know a little about the whereabouts of the Magnetic Pole, but the vast interior is still a sealed book.

The climatology of the Antarctic is marvellous, and very puzzling. During the summer, for example, in which we now find our *Walrus* friends sailing about, the days were often very mild, down along the coast, with its bare brown, black, and yellow earth peeping through the snow, its occasional avalanches of snow, and its sudden transitions from sunshine and warmth to snow-fogs, snow-squalls, and a temperature running down to zero, or below it.

The winds are, to a great extent, accountable for this.

But from the very start of the sledge expedition, or as soon as they got high up on the great table-land of snow, there was little really mild weather,

and, despite the sunshine, the surface seldom, if ever, got soft.

The currents are another marvellous study ; that is, if they can be studied, which they never can be until stations of observation are established all round the so-called Antarctic continent.

The volcanoes are numerous. As I said before, in these regions the great war between the ice above and the fire beneath the earth's crust is still going on, and will doubtless go on for millions of years, unless this globe of ours comes into collision with some invisible wandering world—then the heat evolved will melt the two, and creation, as far as these are concerned, will have to commence all over again.

But other marvels have yet to be revealed to us. We want to know something of the buried earth's crust in these Antarctic regions. We want to find out if possible what species of plants and flowers grew here when the equatorial belt was an uncrossable band of flaming heat ; we would like to know something of its buried forests, and even of the extinct animals that roamed therein, in the shape perhaps of dragons fifty to a hundred feet long which inhabited its lakes and its caves on mountain slopes.

There were such creatures, doubtless, at a time long long ago, when this world was almost entirely

peopled by monsters which are now relegated, too thoughtlessly, to the realms of the mythological.

Have I given you some food for thought, lads?

If I have, I am exceedingly glad, and so I close this short chapter at once.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DASH FOR THE POLE—A WONDROUS SCENE

I was obliged to belay my jawing tackle, as sailors say, in that last chapter, and to cut short my yarn, else my subject, which is to me a most interesting one, might have led me to forget poor lonesome Curtis and Ingomar, sledging, ski-ing, and toiling on and on across bitter untrodden tracks to plant the British and American flags further south on solid land than ever they have been hoisted before.

The same plan was adopted as before, of climbing hills every day to plan out the next day's journey.

The same method, too, of feeding dogs and men. Just enough to work upon, and no more. For they *must* keep food enough to get home on—back to Dr. Wright's camp, I mean—or they would have to kill a dog and eat it.

The "road" was devious enough and toilsome in the extreme for the first week, after which they gradually got into higher regions with fewer

mountains, though mostly volcanic, some emitting clouds of rolling smoke, which would have been pillars of fire by night had the sun gone down.

It would be impossible to describe the character and appearance of the scenery without illustrations. I only wish you to understand that if you place on your table a lot of limpet shells, and call them mountains and the spaces between glens or valleys, you have no more idea of this territory than you have of the surface of the moon. Such mountains as they beheld, I believe, are not to be seen in any other country in the world. There were cone-shaped hills, it is true, and rolling brae lands; but there were those, too, of every shape you could imagine. It was evident to Ingomar even, that the gigantic forces of nature had been at war here for ages and ages, terrible earthquakes, awful explosions, volcanic eruptions, such as not even the people of Iceland ever experienced in the awful days and weeks of darkness long ago.

See yonder half mountain. It stands there in its somewhat solitary grandeur in a plain of snow, as evenly cut down the centre as you see a cheese. Where is the other half? What force divided it? None can answer that. Here, again, is a kind of chaotic heap of hills. That nearest to the plane is a gigantic cliff fully one thousand feet in height, and over the ridge of this a stream must have at one

time dashed. Here it is still, a motionless cataract of ice!

And many miles farther on, and nearer to this Pole, is a marvellous monument. You could not call it a hill, it is an almost square slab, like an old-fashioned tombstone, about fifty yards from back to front, a thousand yards wide, and about two thousand feet in height.

It looks as if a piece of ground as big as an ordinary English field had been thrown up and left standing on end. Explain it who can. I cannot.

And here is an almost circular lake of great extent, in configuration not unlike Loch Ness in Scotland, with mountains rising up from its banks in the same wild way, all ice, all snow, a frozen river leading in and out of it and more than one frozen cataract.

Even Curtis, with all his science, felt puzzled, and could only reply to Ingomar's queries by taking photographic snap-shots everywhere around him.

Perhaps our heroes were favoured during this dash towards the Pole with exceptionally fine weather, but the storms they did encounter were certainly most trying and severe. It was well for the dogs during those blizzards that snow fell and was blown or heaped over them—the Eskimo dog can live under snow as long as a Highland wether can—else their poor coats would have been frozen to the ground.

From this elevated region the land began to sink gradually, the track became easier, the mountains less high.

Then, one morning, shortly after starting, they came suddenly to cliffs or braes that led sheer down many hundred feet to a sea!

Curtis looked at Ingomar, who could only reply by smiling.

Do not mistake me, this was a frozen ocean, and a rough one too.

Descending by what they called a footpath, for want of a better name, the sledges remaining behind, accompanied only by the collie Wallace, they walked a good mile into or across this strange ocean.

The ice was examined, here and there wherever possible, and except on the top of the rugged bergs, which was melted and re-frozen snow, it was everywhere found to be green and salt.

Not far inland was a high hill. *This* was limpet shaped, and coned at the top—an extinct volcano, in fact, but with its crater still unfilled, showing that it still retained heat.

This our heroes climbed with great perseverance and difficulty.

Then, aided by their telescopes, they turned their attention to the south.

Before starting to climb this hill, Curtis quietly

surveyed it, and made its height out to be about 1800 feet.

While he was taking his angles, Ingomar just as quietly brought out a strange-looking flag from under the sledge baggage, and with it a pole.

From the great height at which they now stood the visible horizon would be about forty-eight miles, and looking southwards, eastwards, or westwards nothing was visible except this cold rough sea of ice.

The finger of time had touched it, and lo! for uncounted ages all had been solid and still.

It was the burial-place of the Past. And yet this marvellous ocean had once glimmered blue and beautiful in the sunshine, life had been in its waters, and life in the dead and frozen hill, from which our heroes now were looking down.

Some such thoughts as these must have been passing through their minds at this supreme moment.

Their faces, however, were grave almost to sadness, and neither said a word for at least a minute.

Then Curtis turned to Ingomar, and hand met hand once more in loving clasp.

"Brother," he said simply, "we have made our record, we must now go 'home.'"

"We have made our record," replied Ingomar; "we are standing further south, and nearer to yonder Pole, than man ever stood before, and I think our record proves, or seems to me to prove, that this is

the end of the 'Antarctic continent,' that a sea of ice alone sweeps round the Pole, for not in the furthest distance can we see a single mountain-peak.

"Brother Curtis," he added, "how do you feel about it?"

Curtis smiled.

"To tell you the truth, my friend, I feel no positive inclination to toss my cap in the air. Do you?"

"No, I feel no over-brimming of enthusiasm in my heart or eyes."

"Well, Ingomar, though you and I are both but young, with the world still before us——"

"Stay!" cried Ingomar, laughing a little now. "You say the world is still before us. Don't you think that the world is really all behind us—that we are now at the other end of it?"

"We are young, my friend; but, nevertheless, it must seem, even to us, at this our moment of victory, that exaltation of spirits does not, as a rule, crown real success."

"You are right. All is change in this world, and happiness lies only in onwardness.

'Man never is, but always to be blest.'

"Happiness lies in onwardness, in forwardness, in action, in the doing of a work and not in its completion."

"Just for all the world, Ingomar, like the boy who sets out to scamper half a mile over field and moor to find the cup of gold at the point of the rainbow. The glory of the coloured arch makes him so happy all the while till it vanishes, but he returns disappointed because he has not found the cup of gold at the spot where he made certain it lay."

"But now, away with all thoughts of sadness. I *think* we've made a noble record, so let us sing *your* national hymn, then plant our flag."

"We'll sing both," said Curtis, lifting his cap; "but you first, lad, you first."

The American National Anthem was sung in fine form, and after they had raised the united standard—Stars and Stripes and Union Jack—and given three cheers thereto, still with bared heads in that zero air they sang God save the Queen, for our dear old Empress was then alive—

"God save our gracious Queen,
Long may Victoria reign,
 God save the Queen.
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
 God save the Queen."

As if by mutual consent, they paused for a few minutes to gaze once more, and for the last time, on their new country—on the cold and silent land and sea.

Their own country! Well, they seemed to have conquered it, but it was God's country—the country of the Power which is working out the destiny of this world, and every planet and sun-star we see around us in the solemnity of a winter's night—He has placed the finger of death upon this Great White Land, and it lies sealed in eternal snows. Ah! no, though, not eternal!

There will come a time when all will be changed, for matter cannot die.

How silent! It is a silence that eternalises the very heart, and takes possession of the soul.

Not a sound to be heard! Yes, for up the mountain-side comes now the joyous bark of honest Collie.

And so, the flag being planted, Ingomar and Curtis came slowly down the hill.

They had made their record.

CHAPTER IX

TERRIBLE SUFFERINGS—VICTORY

There was much talk of home to-night, between Curtis and Ingomar. The former told his friend all about his English roof-tree, and cheerfully of his doings while living there as a boy, all his sports, and fun, and play, and his practical jokes on the old gardener. About the horses his father rode to the hounds, and about the hounds themselves. There had only been two in the family, two children, I mean, and sister had a pony as well as he, and, oh! the glorious scampers they had had over his father's wide and beautiful estate, which usually ended, he said, in getting into grief or trouble.

But father was dead, and mother and sister too, and although the land was now his, somehow he did not care to go back and live there. It would be so sad and lonesome. It was grief that had caused him to work so hard, and to take to the study of the sciences, even when but a small cadet on board the old *Britannia*.

"For study, my friend, will kill care, or lessen it. Is it not so, Ingomar?"

"And grief is the parent of Fame, often enough, Curtis."

"I got away on long leave to travel on a semi-scientific expedition with some geologists, and you know it was there I met your beautiful sister. I wonder, brother, if we three shall ever meet again—Marie, you, and I."

"I'll tell you," said Ingomar.

" ' When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.' "

And now to bag, my boy, for the hurly-burly must begin in earnest to-morrow."

* * * * *

It was snowing fast next day when they turned their backs on the great Antarctic sea of ice, and began to retrace their steps back to the camp, where they had left their companions.

No snow nor tempest must bar their progress now, if they would return before their food stores were finished.

Somehow going back is a less exciting experience than going forward with an object in view. The object is gained, and one must think of something else to keep one's spirits up.

* * * * *

Even in the absence of their friends, Ingomar and Lieutenant Curtis, during the month of January and the first two weeks of February, the lads, Charlie and Walter, found something to do. It is good old Watts, I believe, who tells us that—

“The devil still some mischief finds
For idle hands to do.”

But, like brave British boys, they did not mean to wait for the devil to suggest anything. They had brought some books with them, it is true, but their muscles needed exercise, their joints needed lubricants to keep them in health.

So on every available day, every day, indeed, on which a bird could have flown, had there been any birds here, they were off, after breakfast, either on a sleighing trip or a scamper on snow-shoes, accompanied by Nora and Nick.

Gruff and Growley sometimes took it into their wise heads to make two of the party, and Grumpey with Meg would come shuffling up behind, accompanied by their own particular pets, the three Yak dogs that had slept in their den at sea.

They used to return hungry as hunters to the modest midday dinner.

The ponies were never forgotten, we may be sure. It was felt to be a sacred duty to take them out twice a day.

But this was not all, for something, I know not what, had induced the boys to bring with them in the sledge-baggage not only a supply of hockey sticks and balls, but two footballs as well. And so a game of footer was carried on right merrily when weather permitted, halfway down the glen, where the snow was level and hard.

The sailors enjoyed this immensely, so, too, did the Eskimos. So, for the matter of that, did Nick and Nora, although they introduced some new features into the game, which never before had been dreamt of.

Never mind, it was the best of fun. So, too, was hockey. Here, although the dogs took good care not to mingle in a close tussle, they hung round on the outskirts, and pinched the ball and retrieved it.

Anxiety and melancholy began to take possession of the hearts of the expedition, after the time had long gone past wherein Curtis and Ingomar ought to have returned.

The weather was getting very inclement, too. Short, wild storms were becoming more and more frequent, and wind blowing at the rate of ninety miles an hour, breaking the falling snow into suffocating ice-dust.

On such days, hardly even the dogs dared to show face outside. To go beyond the threshold of the igloo gave one a touch of asthma. For the

summer was waning, and, as usual, winding up with short snaps of storm and tempest.

The sun was getting very near to the horizon now, at midnight, and soon would set.

Why came they not? Would they never return?

Hoping against hope, Captain X. proposed giving the men some solid work to do.

Tools of excavation or digging had been brought out, for Curtis meant to try to make an opening in some hillside for the purpose of studying geology.

"Why not make use of these now, while we all await in such suspense? Men," he added, "it'll keep the fingers of us from gettin' frozen, and better a blister than a frost-bite."

Dr. Wright readily gave his consent.

Now, right across the glen, not more than three-quarters of a mile distant, rose a rounded, but somewhat cliffy hill. There was a tantalizing piece of glacier, part ice, part snow, hanging over one cliff, in the shape of a waterfall, though it did not reach quite to the bottom.

Mac was itching to blast it, and lay open a portion at least of the hillside.

And so one day he set to work, and busy picks and shovels soon excavated a hole big enough to admit and bury the explosive.

It was to be fired by electricity from a safe distance, and all hands were there to look on.



M 968

"IT WAS THE BEST OF FUN"

It was great fun for the boys. They both liked Mac, and when, with a kindly twinkle in his blue eyes, he turned round and said, "Now, which of you boys will touch the button and fire the mine?" both said "Oh!" and their faces beamed.

"I won't," said Charlie, "because Walt is six weeks younger."

"Brave boy. Well, Walt, *you*."

And Walt took the thing in hand at once. The explosion that followed was a terrible one; the sky was filled with smoke, and dust, and *débris*, and the dull roar seemed to shake the hills on every side.

When the hillside was thus exposed, every one was puzzled to observe something dark at the foot of it, which resembled the entrance to a cave.

A strong accumulator for electric light had been brought by Curtis, in case it might be needed, and next day, when the cave had had time to ventilate itself from the outside, Mac, Dr. Wright, and the two boys ventured half-fearfully inside.

Here was a cavern, indeed, and one of immense size. It had never been made by human hands, that was certain. The light was turned on the walls and floor in every direction. All were black and bare, but dry.

The mystery lay in the fact, that on touching the floor it was found to be warm. And yet the rocks around were certainly not igneous.

And there was another mystery; on bending down and applying the ear to the floor, a distinct murmuring sound could be heard.

"If it's no fire," said Mac, "it must be steam, and that is the short and the long of it.

"And," he added, "if we have to stay here for many months mair, what a comfortable bield * for baith man and beast this cave will mak."

But there was still a third mystery, for far away at the other end lay a dark pile, and, on advancing and turning the light on this, Mac, sturdy though he was, staggered back in fear and dread.

"God save us a'!" he cried; "that's the banes (bones) o' some awfu' defunct dragons that must hae roamed the woods and forest here millions and millions of years ago!"

"I think," said Dr. Wright, "we had better not touch them till Mr. Curtis arrives."

"Lord love you!" cried honest Mac. "I wadna' touch them wi' the tae o' ma beet (toe of my boot)."

Another week passed away, and so wearily, for there were no signs of the return of the wanderers.

The weather began now to get most inclement, and so it was resolved to remove everything into the cave they had so providentially discovered. This took some time.

* Bield = shelter.

But though there was ample room for even the bears, neither they nor the Yak dogs would enter. They preferred the old camp and the snow.

"I dinna wonder," said Mac, "at their no likin' to come in here, for, gweed save us, doctor, it looks an awfu' uncanny place."

Another week of weary suspense, then, one morning, in rushed Slap-dash himself. He could only say hurriedly that the sledge team was within five miles, but dogs and men were too exhausted to come further.

* * * * *

Curtis and Ingomar were brought in that forenoon. The meeting was a very joyful one, although Dr. Wright at once forbade all talking for the time being.

He then put them all on the sick list, and in three days' time they were able to talk, though but feebly, and tell of their sufferings and dangers. How, when they could not have been more than two days' journey from the camp, they were overwhelmed by a sudden and fearful storm in which one dog was killed. How nearly all the meagre remainder of biscuits was destroyed, how they struggled on and on, too weak, almost, to wish to live, the poor dogs lying down almost at every mile, for their feet were swollen and bleeding, and even when they did move, it was with listless, hanging heads, for they seemed

to have abandoned all hope. How they (Curtis and Ingomar) took to their snow-shoes, although their limbs were hot and swollen, and their faces blistered. How they lost the road, for the photographs were now of no use, and at last lay down among the dogs to die.

Oh, it was a pitiful story, but a record of sufferings borne manfully and uncomplainingly, for they had done their best, and were leaving the rest to God.

"No," said Ingomar; "we felt no pain of any kind, not even cold, when we fell, rather than lay down. Drowsy, though; yes, very drowsy, and I knew the drowsiness was that of death. The last thing I remember was poor Wallace licking my cheek. But for that dog and Slap-dash we should have been buried in the snow. But cheerily does it, Curtis, old man. We have more harm yet to do, if we can only get back home to do it."

The dogs were soon themselves again, and fit for anything; but another fortnight elapsed before Curtis and Ingomar were strong enough to take much interest in anything.

One day Dr. Wright proclaimed them quite out of danger. They had only to eat, and so an extra allowance of good things was given them, and they grew well after this, as if by magic.

There could be no thought of returning, however, to the seashore now, until winter was past. *If* they

could but live through it. An ugly little “if” that.

“It won’t be half so bad as we think,” said Macdonald, cheerily. “We’ve plenty to eat, though we might dae wi’ a drap mair whisky.

“I dinna believe half what I read about the rigours o’ the Antarctic winter, only you sair-footit Englishmen are brocht up to be frichtened at a pickle snaw. Noo, if I had you in the Hielans——”

“Hush, hush! Mac,” cried Curtis, laughing. “Don’t give us any more Hielans just at present”—it was at breakfast. “Listen, old man, our provisions will last us through the remains of the autumn, and through the darkness of the long winter, till the sun comes out again; but we must work now while it is called to-day, and I am going to examine these wonderful bones of yours this very forenoon.”

“*My* bones! What’s the matter wi’ my bones? I’ve Hielan’ bones and Hielan’ blood, and if——”

“I know, Mac, I know. But I mean that heap!”

“I’ll tak’ naething to do wi’t. It’s hardly canny to bide (stay) in the same room wi’ such an awful cairn. But to touch them—Ugh!”

But the men were not so superstitious, and heavy though they were, soon had most of them carried out to the light, and, under Curtis’s direction, they were arranged to form complete skeletons.

Even this young scientist himself was a little puzzled until he had examined the strata of the cave, for what had been bones originally were now petrified, or turned into stone by the drip of water containing silicates, etc., from above.

The monsters had belonged to ages long past, when the now snow-capped Antarctic continent was a world of life and wild beauty. The biggest skeleton was sixty-four feet long, and with terrible jaws and teeth. They were evidently saurians of a prehistoric period, with the bodies of gigantic snakes, and the flippers of seals to enable them to seek their prey in the water as well as on the dry land.

A mystery of the past! They were carefully restored, but some day will doubtless be seen in one of the great museums of Paris or London.

But autumn was now far advanced, and it was not without some degree of uncertainty that Curtis himself looked forward to the long dark night of winter.

CHAPTER X

A CHAPTER OF JOY AND SADNESS

It would not be far wrong to say that for the next month or six weeks, ere the sun went finally down, Hope sustained the hearts of our heroes almost as much as did the food they ate.

That there was a bad time before them they seemed to feel. Coming events cast their shadows before. But they wanted to have the shadow over and done with, and come to the dark stern reality itself.

They meant to make a bold stand for life anyhow.

Moreover, the behaviour of the Yak-Yaks themselves gave them additional courage. They pooh-poohed the winter darkness. Sheelah and Taffy were quite gay now, and made every one who heard them talk, more happy. Their own tongue is singularly sweet and labial, but even their broken English sounded musical.

"Fo' de cold and de dark I no care—Pah!" cried Sheelah, snapping her eyes.

The younger Taffy waxed even sentimental over the thoughts of the winter.

"The col' plenty much I lub," she said, "and de night, oh, I lubs plenty much mo'."

And these two strange little women went about all day long, humming little songs to themselves, but working as hard as honey-bees.

As the days grew shorter and shorter, the scenery in fine weather grew more mysterious, the hills and the snow assumed tints, ay, and strong colours, that were often magically beautiful.

Cold as it now was, it was a positive delight for our heroes to get away some distance from the cave-camp, and behold a sunset or a sunrise. Oh, you didn't require to get up at all early now, reader, to see a sunrise.

Will the day ever come, I wonder, when the artist will be able, in colours, to interpret the descriptions which the author and student of nature try to depict?

Till then, much, so very much, must be left to the imagination.

* * * * *

No one in this country, probably, has ever seen a vermillion sun. But this is what greeted the eyes of our heroes on one of the last, short days of autumn.

A sun that you could gaze at unflinchingly, for it was rayless, gaze at and wonder.

In all their difficulties the boys appealed to Curtis, for whom, young though he was, they had the very highest respect. On this occasion, however, he owned

up, as young folks say, that he was a little puzzled, for there was neither fog nor haze upon the earth, whatever there might be very high up. But yonder was the sun all day long, figuratively speaking, turned to blood.

Mac averred that it wasna canny, and that something was sure to follow.

Well, night followed, anyhow, and a long and dreary one it was, with ne'er a star, although the sky, to all appearance, was cloudless.

About this time it was noticed that the bears got altogether more friendly together. Gruff no longer kept Growley in his corner, and he ceased to show his affection to his "sonsy" wife; I mean he whacked her no more.

For a whole week they were ravenously hungry, and one night they stole more of the frozen seal-flesh, and devoured it, than would have served to feed the dogs for a fortnight.

They were missing that night.

Poor Gruff, and Growley, and Grumpey, and Meg. I am indeed sorry to let them pass out of my story, but they never came again.

Whither they had wandered is, of course, mere surmise, but, owing to the disappearance of the seal-meat, I think there is little doubt that they had found a cave and hidden themselves there to hibernate till spring.

Perhaps (*quien sabe?*) they will live in the

Antarctic regions, and, in future, bears may become a by no means uncommon feature of the scenery.

The sun set for the very last time in a splendour of cloudscape that seemed almost supernatural and divine.

There was twilight after this, but soon even that was lost to view.

Then came frequent storms of such violence that, but for the shelter of that mysterious cave—"the Cave of Dead Bones," as Mac called it—it is doubtful whether the whole expedition would not have perished.

While these storms raged the winds were cold, cruel, merciless. No one could withstand their vehemence. They were more bearable when they brought snow—snow or the thin snowflakes turned into ice-dust, powdered by wrathful and venomous wind. This snow was swept wildly past the cave's front, which was well barricaded ; but wherever it was given leave to rest it lay in "wreaths," like storm-waves of ocean or Atlantic breakers on a beach, if you could imagine these suddenly solidified by the finger of death, and motionless, "wreaths" big enough to have covered a cathedral.

Battling with such winds is out of the question. You get angry, excited with the unequal contest ; your brain is filled with blood, and tears of vexation roll over the cheeks. Then it is nothing unusual for men so exposed to drop suddenly dead.

I must confess to you that my young heroes,

Charlie and Walter, lost heart and courage whenever those awful storms began to howl and yell without ; and but for the cheerful voices of Sheelah and Taffy, whom in the cave they could not see, they would have succumbed entirely.

Luckily the gales and snow-blizzards did not last very long. Seldom more than a day, and when the wind went down, and moon and stars, or the Aurora and stars, shed their wonder-light over the scenery, the boys were once more happy and gay.

On the days—strange to say days when all was night—when the temperature fell to 20° and 30° below zero, cold was not complained of, but zero itself, with the wind-fiend raging, was misery that cannot be described.

Dr. Wright did everything a brave doctor could do to keep his people in health and fit. Curtis was no longer commander save in name. He had to cave in to the doctor, and do all he was bidden.

MacDonald told his queerest stories after dinner, and sang his love lilts as heartsomely as do the blackbirds in early spring.

Everybody had come to look upon Mac as a brick, and his cheerful Doric voice even in the dark was delightful to listen to. He used to "bag the boys" at night, as he termed it, Charlie with Nick, and Walter with Nora. "Bag them" snugly, too. He was like a mother to them. Of course all hands

turned in very early, and as Curtis's bag (and Collie's) and also Dr. Wright's were close to Mac's and the boys', the Yak-dogs filling up the intervals or lying round the sides, Mac could lie and yarn, or even sing, to all hands for two hours at a stretch. The British sailors were not far away in their bags, and they could listen too.

There is no seaman in the world like our handy man the British, and through all that long and trying Antarctic night these good fellows, though I have said little about them, behaved like heroes.

All kinds of games could still be carried on in the light, but sleighing was discontinued.

In these regions it is just after turning in that one feels most cold, but any such course as warm drinks or nightcaps (drinkable, I mean) would make matters worse.

Slap-dash and his people used often to worship the moon, just as they had the sun. The sun may be the god of these poor souls, but the moon is his high priest, and the Aurora are his angels.

Well, a religion of any sort is better than none.

Once when the moon was about three days old she took on a strange but most lovely appearance. The stars, except the highest, which were exceedingly brilliant, burned somewhat less brightly at the time. But it was towards the moon all eyes turned.

It was, if I may so describe it, a kind of rainbow

moon. The outer arc was of the deepest orange colour, the next and largest arc was pale yellow, but brilliant, then an arc of radiant sea-green, while inside all was an arc of pale but indescribably beautiful mauve.

Hitherto the boys and Ingomar himself had believed, or been taught to believe, that the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, with their fringe-like bands of opal, pink, or green, were far more lovely than the Southern magnetic lights, the Aurora Australis.

During their sojourn in the Antarctic they had time to alter their opinion.

I feel it is presumption on my part to attempt to describe a display of this Aurora, because I shall hardly succeed in making myself understood.

Just imagine, if you can, a wide and wondrous arch, stretching from east to west, and nearly half-way up the sky, more rounded than a rainbow, its ends apparently within a few feet of the snow-field.

At first the arch resembled a vast chain, every link of which was a ring of brightest gold, each link overlapping its neighbour to about one-half its extent, but all turbulent, all a-quiver! But lo! as one gazed on it, strangely fascinated, the rings, though still linked together, turned half-edge-on towards the right. Then from each ring, as a spherical base, was suddenly thrown out a triangle of glittering, darting, quivering, golden light.

But speedily is the apex of each triangle extended zenithwards, and broadened out, till it resembles a brush. The rings get smaller and smaller beneath, until they are but bright points of light like heads of comets ; in very truth, there is now a broad archway of comets, heads downward towards the snow.

But listen. While the heads of these comets retain the brightness of stars of gold, the extended brushes, or tails, are now bunches of rainbow-coloured, flickering, dancing, darting light.

It is a bewildering sight, and it is hard to believe it real.

Gradually the tails get shorter, become once more the apexes of spherical triangles, and dance, and disappear, the chain of golden rings becoming once more visible as before.

All beneath this archway is a dark-blue sky, in which stars shine, and the rest of the firmament is quite unaffected, though the mountains and snow-clad valley borrow the colour and add to the bewildering grandeur of the most marvellous transformation scene the world can ever witness.

I fear I have failed to give my youthful readers an adequate conception of the Aurora. I feared I should fail before I commenced. But Britons—and I am one—should never funk, and I have done my best.

* * * * *

It is strange, and sadly strange, that, although Dr.

Wright and his men had borne bravely up, throughout the livelong night of the dreary Antarctic continent, as soon as day returned, revealing blue and ghastly faces, sickness came.

This is no place in which to inquire into the cause of this sickness ; suffice it to say that it came, and the men, hitherto brave and hearty, began to droop and shiver.

An optimist at most times, and ever ready to look upon the bright side of circumstances, the doctor himself began now to fear the worst.

Long before my own experiences of Arctic life, there used to be in Polar regions a disease called the black death.

Whether or not the illness that now attacked this little camp of heroes was a species of that ailment, I am not prepared to say.

I hate to have too much gloom in my stories, or I could describe the symptoms so graphically that you would shudder.

Suffice it to know that, though there were no unsightly swellings, and though the faces of the sufferers retained even their complacency when fits of shivering and cramp abated, they were melancholy and sad sights until they either recovered or died.

Let me say at once that though both Charlie and Walter were ill a few days, owing to the resiliency of youth they were not stricken down, and speedily

recovered so far as to be able to assist the truly sick.

It need not be said that Dr. Wright did all that any medical man could have done. Just one or two of the Eskimos collapsed utterly, and died on the third day. They were buried not far off in the snow. Two days after a sailor followed them to the snow-field. He did not say much, even at the worst, and finally he simply fell asleep. Only one out of the four other men attacked recovered, and this was far more from good management and the kindly nursing of Sheelah and Taffy than from medicine. In fact, though wine did good when the patient was at the lowest ebb, and helped him to fight his way round the corner to restoration, medicine was for the most part useless.

Curtis was early down, and, strangely enough, considering how truly brave he was, his spirits drooped to zero, and he gave up hope of himself from the first.

Ingomar nursed his dear friend indefatigably, and when, overcome with fatigue, he dropped off to sleep, either Sheelah or Taffy was always sitting by his brother when he awoke.

I cannot really testify in strong enough language to the marvellous qualities of those gentle little Yak women as sick nurses.

We may laugh at such people, but ah! curious

though their customs be, and droll their manners, they are our sisters before God.

Slap-dash remained his old self.

Let me cut this all short by saying that of all the crew of brave men, only twelve remained to take the road back to the seashore.

Perhaps as sad a case as any was that of poor MacDonald, who had been so long the life and soul of all the camp.

When Dr. Wright told the boys that he could only last a few hours, and that they must go and see him now, they summoned courage enough to have the interview.

They behaved splendidly in his presence, but as soon as they went into the open air again they both utterly broke down and wept, until their hearts appeared almost bursting.

"It does seem hard, does it not, Walter?" Charlie managed to say.

"Always so kind and good," said Walter.

"Ay, ay, and I never knew I loved him half so much till now."

* * * * *

Mac, once the hardy, resolute Scot, passed away that same day.

In the semi-darkness of the cave Ingomar was kneeling by his side and holding his hand.

He had lived a Scot ; he died a Scot.

Ingomar thought he had fallen into a slumber, so quiet did he lie. But he spoke at last, though with feeble, faltering voice.

"It's you, isn't it, Ingomar?"

"I'm here, dear Mac."

"Well, I—I know I'm dying. I wouldn't care—but mother——"

"What can I do to ease your mind?"

"She kens I love her—I've been single for her sake. Promise to get all I've saved, Ingomar. Her dear auld-farrent * letters and my bank-book are a' in my box. Ingomar—you—promise?"

"Most sacredly."

"God love you! She'll no be lang ahint (behind) her laddie."

He lay still a little while, and he spoke but once again—repeating a verse of the 23rd Psalm.

" 'Yea, though I walk thro' death's dark veil,
Yet will I fear none ill ;
For Thou art with me ;
And Thy rod and staff me comfort still.' "

"Is that the Aurora? Ingomar, tell me. Oh, how bright and how—joyful—Father——"

He was gone!

He had seen the Aurora; but it was the morning dawn of a happier life.

* Old-fashioned.

CHAPTER XI

"ENGLAND, HOME, AND BEAUTY"

Six weeks after this, and when the captain of the *Walrus* had given the explorers up for lost, after searching the snows in vain, for winter storms had obliterated every track, ten men with two dog-sledges suddenly appeared above Glen Bell on the ridge of the great tableland.

They rested there.

They knew they were seen.

In the stillness of the early summer's morning they could hear the wild shouts of greeting that arose from their shipmates.

And you may easily guess that assistance was speedily on its way to the top of the valley.

I leave you to guess also the kind of welcome accorded to men and dogs.

Why, Slap-dash himself came in for hugging, and Wallace hugged every one indiscriminately all round. Dr. Wright, Ingomar, Curtis, and the boys were all sadly worn and fallow. They had but little life in them. Even their courage appeared to have left

them. They smiled, it is true, but it was the smile of sickly old men.

When they were helped on board at last, and had a little food and wine, they begged for a bath and to be shaved. After this, and dressed in fresh clothing, they were in some measure restored.

Captain Bell and the other officers of the *Sea Elephant* had come on board, and to them Ingomar, who was stronger than the rest, told the sad story of their terrible hardships, and their struggle to reach the ships. When he spoke of poor MacDonald, there was not an eye in the room that was not dimmed with tears.

But there! I myself must pull up. I would not have my very last chapter dimmed with sorrow.

Suffice it to say that not only these five real heroes, but the Yak-Yaks, including Slap-dash and Sheelah and Taffy, were in a month's time their old selves again.

Of the animals, strange to say the Shetland ponies, Jack and Gill, had been least affected, while Wallace had returned hungry, Nick and Nora standing by delightedly as he ate the food prepared for him. The Newfoundland, as soon as he had finished, proposed a romp round the decks. Wallace tried, but soon lay down to rest and pant.

"Another day, I hope," the honest Collie appealed, "but somehow I feel a little tired."

When the good old *Walrus* was sawn out of her quarters and got into blue water again, with all and everything on board, and when the *Sea Elephant* lay quiet and still on the calm blue sea, a dinner was given on board the flagship.

The blessing asked by good Captain Walt was a prayer of thanks to the Almighty Power that had guided them through their trials, through sickness, danger, and difficulty.

I think all hands, fore and aft, who partook in the festivities, were just a little great-hearted at first, but all sadness was soon dispelled.

They had all done their duties bravely and well, as British and American sailors and soldiers always do.

So upon the whole a very happy evening was spent, the thought that next day they would bear up once more for the shores of Merrie England—England, home, and beauty—put life and spirit in them, and they retired at last, happy and hopeful.

I don't think that any one on board the *Walrus* or *Sea Elephant* is ever likely to forget the sweetness of that Antarctic summer morning—the morning of the start. The sea with its beauty-tints of opal and blue, a sea studded with the snow-white of tiny bergs, the great mountains towering skywards, and the world, the marvellous world, of bird-life.

Do you know that, great though their sufferings

and hardships had been, every one looked back to the scene of their adventures with just a little feeling akin to sorrow!

Up steam!

Round go the screws, churning up a frothy white wake, slowly move the ships away, slowly, and apparently reluctantly.

But, in a few hours' time, those sturdy ships are merrily bobbing and curtseying to each advancing wave, as if they really know that, at long, long last, they are homeward bound.

And now nothing reigns aboard, fore or aft, except happiness and general jollity, in which even the dogs themselves take part.

Homeward bound! Hurrah!

* * * * *

When, in about two months' time, the *Walrus* and *Sea Elephant* came quietly to anchor inside the breakwater of Plymouth, people gazed and wondered what these two strange ships could be.

But when the truth was rumoured abroad that they were the Antarctic voyagers, the wild welcome they received was enough to have turned the heads of any sailors on this earth.

* * * * *

Parting!

Yes, parting, yet parting—every one assured his shipmates—to meet again and talk over old times.

The boys, Charlie and Walter, going off to their "uncle's" home.

Dr. Wright to duties elsewhere.

The scientists to London.

Slap-dash and his dogs and Yak-Yaks, including faithful Sheelah and Taffy, to London, with the scientists.

The boys got all the three dogs, and happy enough the dear fellows seemed to get on shore again.

Parting! Ah, yes, it is a sad word, and so I leave it.

* * * * *

Ingomar, the prodigal son, returned to his home.

"Can you forgive me now, father?" he said, after he had embraced his mother and sister.

"Bosh, boy!" cried the old man. "Go and sit down." But there were tears in his eyes nevertheless.

Curtis was here, too.

Curtis came home to find he had succeeded to a baronetcy and another large estate. But this would not have stirred his spirits in the least had not Marie greeted him so joyously.

He used to call her his Marie. In six weeks' time she was his Marie in reality.

They were married.

Ingomar says *he* will never marry. I simply smile.

He is owner, anyhow, of one of the most splendid yachts ever built in America or England.

No 'long-shore yacht. Not built for racing or speed, but comfort, pleasure, and beauty. Curtis has left the service. The yacht takes very long, delightful cruises, but wherever she goes with Ingomar, her master, both Arnold Curtis and his sweet wife go along as well.

My story is ended, my tale is told. I have only to say "Good-bye, my boy reader, and God be with us all."

I trust and hope we'll meet again another day.





